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THE STORY OF THE GADSBYS

THE
STORY OF THE GADSBYS

BY
RUDYARD KIPLING

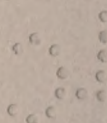


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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
POOR DEAR MAMA.....	7
THE WORLD WITHOUT.....	22
THE TENTS OF KEDAR.....	37
WITH ANY AMAZEMENT.....	52
THE GARDEN OF EDEN.....	66
FATIMA.....	80
THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.....	99
THE SWELLING OF JORDAN.....	113

PREFACE.

TO THE ADDRESS OF

CAPTAIN J. MAFFLIN,

Duke of Derry's (Pink) Hussars.

DEAR MAFFLIN,—You will remember that I wrote this story as an Awful Warning. None the less you have seen fit to disregard it and have followed Gadsby's example—as I betted you would. I acknowledge that you paid the money at once, but you have prejudiced the mind of Mrs. Mafflin against myself, for though I am almost the only respectable friend of your bachelor days, she has been *darwaza band* to me throughout the season. Further, she caused you to invite me to dinner at the Club, where you called me “a wild ass of the desert,” and went home at half-past ten, after discoursing for twenty minutes on the responsibilities of housekeeping. You now drive a mail-phæton and sit under a Church of England clergyman. I am not angry, Jack. It is your *kismet*, as it was Gaddy's, and his *kismet* who can avoid? Do not think that I am moved by a spirit of revenge as I write, thus publicly, that you

and you alone are responsible for this book. In other and more expansive days, when you could look at a magnum without flushing and at a cheroot without turning white, you supplied me with most of the material. Take it back again—would that I could have preserved your fetterless speech in the telling—take it back, and by your slippered hearth read it to the late Miss Deercourt. She will not be any the more willing to receive my cards, but she will admire you immensely, and you, I feel sure, will love me. You may even invite me to another very bad dinner—at the Club, which, as you and your wife know, is a safe neutral ground for the entertainment of wild asses. Then, my very dear hypocrite, we shall be quits.

Yours always,

RUDYARD KIPLING.

P. S.—On second thoughts I should recommend you to keep the book away from Mrs. Mafflin.

POOR DEAR MAMA.

THE wild hawk to the wind-swept sky,
The deer to the wholesome wold,
And the heart of a man to the heart of a maid,
As it was in the days of old.

Gypsy Song.

SCENE.—*Interior of MISS MINNIE THREEGAN'S bedroom at Simla. MISS THREEGAN, in window-seat, turning over a drawerful of chiffons. MISS EMMA DEERCOURT, bosom-friend, who has come to spend the day, sitting on the bed, manipulating the bodice of a ball-room frock and a bunch of artificial lilies of the valley. Time 5.30 P. M., on a hot May afternoon.*

MISS DEERCOURT.—And *he* said:—"I shall *never* forget this dance," and, of course, I said:—"Oh! How *can* you be so silly!" Do you think he meant anything, dear?

MISS THREEGAN.—(*Extracting long lavender silk stocking from the rubbish.*) You know him better than *I* do.

MISS D.—Oh, *do* be sympathetic, Minnie! I'm *sure* he does. At least I *would* be sure

8 The Story of the Gadsbys

if he wasn't always riding with that odious Mrs. Hagan.

MISS T.—I suppose so. How *does* one manage to dance through one's heels first? Look at this—isn't it shameful? (*Spreads stocking-heel on open hand for inspection.*)

MISS D.—Never mind that! You can't mend it. Help me with this hateful bodice. I've run the string *so*, and I've run the string *so*, and I *can't* make the fulness come right. Where would you put this? (*Waves lilies of the valley.*)

MISS T.—As high up on the shoulder as possible.

MISS D.—Am I quite tall enough? I know it makes May Olger look lop-sided.

MISS T.—Yes, but May hasn't your shoulders. Hers are like a hock-bottle.

BEARER.—(*Rapping at door.*) Captain Sahib *aya*.

MISS D.—(*Jumping up wildly, and hunting for body, which she has discarded owing to the heat of the day.*) Captain Sahib! What Captain Sahib? Oh, good gracious, and I'm only half dressed! Well, I shan't bother.

MISS T.—(*Calmly.*) You needn't. It isn't for us. That's Captain Gadsby. He is going for a ride with Mama. He generally comes five days out of the seven.

AGONIZED VOICE.—(*From an inner apartment.*) Minnie, run out and give Captain Gadsby some tea, and tell him I shall be

ready in ten minutes; and, O Minnie, come to me an instant, there's a dear girl!

Miss T.—O bother! (*Aloud.*) Very well, Mama.

Exit, and reappears, after five minutes, flushed, and rubbing her fingers.

Miss D.—You look pink. What has happened?

Miss T.—(*In a stage whisper.*) A twenty-four-inch waist, and she won't let it out. Where are my bangles? (*Rummages on the toilet table, and dabs at her hair with a brush in the interval.*)

Miss D.—Who is this Captain Gadsby? I don't think I've met him.

Miss T.—You *must* have. He belongs to the Harrar set. I've danced with him, but I've never talked to him. He's a big yellow man, just like a newly hatched chicken, with an e-normous mustache. He walks like this (*imitates Cavalry swagger*), and he goes "Ha—Hmmm!" deep down his throat when he can't think of anything to say. Mama likes him. I don't.

Miss D.—(*Abstractedly.*) Does he wax that mustache?

Miss T.—(*Busy with powder-puff.*) Yes, I think so. Why?

Miss D.—(*Bending over the bodice and sewing furiously.*) Oh, nothing—only . . .

Miss D.—(*Sternly.*) Only what? Out with it, Emma.

10 The Story of the Gadsbys

MISS D.—Well, May Olger—she's engaged to Mr. Charteris, you know—said . . . Promise you won't repeat this?

MISS T.—Yes, I promise. What did she say?

MISS D.—That—that being kissed (*with a rush*) by a man who *didn't* wax his mustache was—like eating an egg without salt.

MISS T.—(*At her full height, with crushing scorn.*) May Olger is a horrid, nasty *Thing*, and you can tell her I said so. I'm glad she doesn't belong to my set . . . I must go and feed this *man*! Do I look presentable?

MISS D.—Yes, perfectly. Be quick and hand him over to your Mother, and then we can talk. *I* shall listen at the door to hear what you say to him.

MISS T.—'Sure I don't care. *I'm* not afraid of Captain Gadsby.

In proof of this swings into drawing-room with a mannish stride followed by two short steps, which produce the effect of a restive horse entering. Misses CAPTAIN GADSBY, who is sitting in the shadow of the window-curtain, and gazes round helplessly.

CAPTAIN GADSBY.—(*Aside.*) The filly, by Jove! Must ha' picked up that action from the sire. (*Aloud, rising.*) Good evening, Miss Threegan.

MISS T.—(*Conscious that she is flushing.*) Good evening, Captain Gadsby. Mama told me to say that she will be ready in a few

minutes. Won't you have some tea? (*Aside.*) I hope Mama will be quick. What *am* I to say to the creature? (*Aloud and abruptly.*) Milk and sugar?

CAPT. G.—No sugar, tha-anks, and very little milk. Ha-Hmmm.

MISS T.—(*Aside.*) If he's going to do that, I'm lost. I shall laugh. I *know* I shall!

CAPT. G.—(*Pulling at his mustache and watching it sideways down his nose.*) Ha-Hmmm! (*Aside.*) 'Wonder what the little beast can talk about. 'Must make a shot at it.

MISS T.—(*Aside.*) Oh, this is agonizing. I *must* say something.

BOTH TOGETHER.—Have you been . . .

CAPT. G.—I beg your pardon. You were going to say—

MISS T.—(*Who has been watching the mustache with awed fascination.*) Won't you have some eggs?

CAPT. G.—(*Looking bewilderedly at the teatable.*) Eggs! (*Aside.*) Oh, Hades! She must have a nursery-tea at this hour. S'pose they've wiped her mouth and sent her to me while the Mother is getting on her duds. (*Aloud.*) No, thanks.

MISS T.—(*Crimson with confusion.*) Oh! I didn't mean that. I wasn't thinking of mu—eggs for an instant. I mean *salt*. Won't you have some sa—sweets? (*Aside.*)

He'll think me a raving lunatic. I wish Mama would come.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) It *was* a nursery-tea and she's ashamed of it. By Jove! She doesn't look half bad when she colors up like that. (*Aloud, helping himself from the dish.*) Have you seen those new chocolates at Peliti's?

MISS T.—No, I made these myself. What are they like?

CAPT. G.—These! *De-licious.* (*Aside.*) And that's a fact.

MISS T.—(*Aside.*) Oh, bother! He'll think I'm fishing for compliments. (*Aloud.*) No, Peliti's of course.

CAPT. G.—(*Enthusiastically.*) Not to compare with these. How d'you make them? I can't get my *khansamah* to understand the simplest thing beyond mutton and *murghi*.

MISS T.—Yes? I'm not a *khansamah*, you know. Perhaps you frighten him. You should never frighten a servant. He loses his head. It's very bad policy.

CAPT. G.—He's so awfully stupid.

MISS T.—(*Folding her hands in her lap.*) You should call him quietly and say:—"O *khansamah jee!*"

CAPT. G.—(*Getting interested.*) Yes? (*Aside.*) Fancy that little featherweight saying, "O *khansamah jee*" to my blood-thirsty Mir Khan!

MISS T.—Then you should explain the dinner, dish by dish.

CAPT. G.—But I can't speak the vernacular.

MISS T.—(*Patronizingly.*) You should pass the Higher Standard and try.

CAPT. G.—I have, but I don't seem to be any the wiser. Are you?

MISS T.—I never passed the Higher Standard. But the *khansamah* is very patient with me. He doesn't get angry when I talk about sheep's *topees*, or order *maunds* of grain when I mean *seers*.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside, with intense indignation.*) I'd like to see Mir Khan being rude to that girl! Hullo! Steady the Buffs! (*Aloud.*) And do you understand about horses, too?

MISS T.—A little—not very much. I can't doctor them, but I know what they ought to eat, and I am in charge of our stable.

CAPT. G.—Indeed! You might help me then. What ought a man to give his *sais* in the Hills? My ruffian says eight rupees, because everything is so dear.

MISS T.—Six rupees a month, and one rupee Simla allowance—neither more nor less. And a grass-cut gets six rupees. That's better than buying grass in the bazar.

CAPT. G.—(*Admiringly.*) How do you know?

MISS T.—I have tried both ways.

CAPT. G.—Do you ride much, then? I've never seen you on the Mall?

14 The Story of the Gadsbys

MISS T.—(*Aside.*) I haven't passed him *more* than fifty times. (*Aloud.*) Nearly every day.

CAPT. G.—By Jove! I didn't know that. Ha-Hmmm! (*Pulls at his mustaches and is silent for forty seconds.*)

MISS T.—(*Desperately, and wondering what will happen next.*) It looks beautiful. I shouldn't touch it if I were you. (*Aside.*) It's all Mama's fault for not coming before. I *will* be rude!

CAPT. G.—(*Bronzing under the tan, and bringing down his hand very quickly.*) Eh? Wha-at! Oh, yes! Ha! Ha! (*Laughs uneasily. Aside.*) Well, of *all* the dashed cheek! I never had a woman say that to me yet. She must be a cool hand or else . . . Ah! that nursery tea!

VOICE FROM THE UNKNOWN.—Tchk! Tchk! Tchk!

CAPT. G.—Good gracious! What's that?

MISS T.—The dog, I think. (*Aside.*) Emma *has* been listening, and I'll never forgive her!

CAPT. O.—(*Aside.*) They don't keep dogs here. (*Aloud.*) 'Didn't sound like a dog, did it?

MISS T.—Then it must have been the cat. Let's go into the veranda. What a lovely evening it is!

Steps into veranda and looks out across the hills into sunset. The CAPTAIN follows.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) Superb eyes! I wonder that I never noticed them before! (*Aloud.*) There's going to be a dance at Viceregal Lodge on Wednesday. Can you spare me one?

MISS T.—(*Shortly.*) No! I don't want any of your charity-dances. You only ask me because Mama told you to. I hop and I bump. You *know* I do!

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) That's true, but little girls shouldn't understand these things. (*Aloud.*) No, on my word, I don't. You dance beautifully.

MISS T.—Then why do you always stand out after half a dozen turns? I thought officers in the Army didn't tell fibs.

CAPT. G.—It wasn't a fib, believe me. I really *do* want the pleasure of a dance with you.

MISS T. — (*Wickedly*). Why? Won't Mama dance with you any more?

CAPT. G.—(*More earnestly than the necessity demands.*) I wasn't thinking of your Mother. (*Aside.*) You little vixen!

MISS T.—(*Still looking out of the window.*) Eh? Oh, I beg your pardon. I was thinking of something else.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) Well! I wonder what she'll say next. I've never known a woman treat *me* like this before. I might be—Dash it, I might be an Infantry subaltern! (*Aloud.*) Oh, *please* don't trouble. I'm not

16 The Story of the Gadsbys

worth thinking about. Isn't your Mother ready yet ?

MISS T.—I should think so ; but promise me, Captain Gadsby, you won't take poor dear Mama twice round Jakko any more. It tires her so.

CAPT. G.—She says that no exercise tires her.

MISS T.—Yes, but she suffers afterwards. *You* don't know what rheumatism is, and you oughtn't to keep her out so late, when it gets chilly in the evenings.

CAPT. G. — (*Aside.*) Rheumatism ! I *thought* she came off her horse rather in a bunch. Whew ! One lives and learns. (*Aloud.*) I'm sorry to hear that. She hasn't mentioned it to me.

MISS T.—(*Flurried.*) Of course not ! Poor dear Mama never would. And you mustn't say that I told you either. Promise me that you won't. Oh, Captain Gadsby, *promise* me you won't !

CAPT. G.—I am dumb, or—I shall be as soon as you've given me that dance, and another . . . if you can trouble yourself to think about me for a minute.

MISS T.—But you won't like it one little bit. You'll be awfully sorry afterwards.

CAPT. G.—I shall like it above all things, and I shall only be sorry that I didn't get more. (*Aside.*) Now what in the world am I saying ?

MISS T.—Very well. You will have only yourself to thank if your toes are trodden on. Shall we say Seven?

CAPT. G.—And Eleven. (*Aside.*) She can't be more than eight stone, but, even then, it's an absurdly small foot. (*Looks at his own riding boots.*)

MISS T.—They're beautifully shiny. I can almost see my face in them.

CAPT. G.—I was thinking whether I should have to go on crutches for the rest of my life if you trod on my toes.

MISS T.—Very likely. Why not change Eleven for a square?

CAPT. G.—No, *please!* I want them both waltzes. Won't you write them down?

MISS T.—*I* don't get so many dances that I shall confuse them. *You* will be the offender.

CAPT. G.—Wait and see! (*Aside.*) She doesn't dance perfectly, perhaps, but . . .

MISS T.—Your tea must have got cold by this time. Won't you have another cup?

CAPT. G.—No, thanks. Don't you think it's pleasanter out in the veranda? (*Aside.*) I never saw hair take that color in the sunshine before. (*Aloud.*) It's like one of Dicksee's pictures.

MISS T.—Yes! It's a wonderful sunset, isn't it? (*Bluntly.*) But what do *you* know about Dicksee's pictures?

CAPT. G.—I go Home occasionally. And

18 The Story of the Gadsbys

I used to know the Galleries. (*Nervously.*) You mustn't think me only a Philistine with . . . a mustache.

MISS T.—Don't! *Please* don't! I'm *so* sorry for what I said then. I was *horribly* rude. It slipped out before I thought. Don't you know the temptation to say frightful and shocking things just for the mere sake of saying them? I'm afraid I gave way to it.

CAPT. G.—(*Watching the girl as she flushes.*) I *think* I know the feeling. It would be terrible if we all yielded to it, wouldn't it? For instance, I might say . . .

POOR DEAR MAMA.—(*Entering, habited, hatted, and booted.*) Ah, Captain Gadsby! 'Sorry to keep you waiting. 'Hope you haven't been bored. 'My little girl been talking to you?

MISS T.—(*Aside.*) I'm not sorry I spoke about the rheumatism. I'm not! I'm NOT! I only wish I'd mentioned the corns too.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) What a shame! I wonder how old she is. It never occurred to me before. (*Aloud.*) We've been discussing "Shakespeare and the musical glasses" in the veranda.

MISS T.—(*Aside.*) Nice man! He knows that quotation. He *isn't* a Philistine with a mustache. (*Aloud.*) Good-by, Captain Gadsby. (*Aside.*) What a huge hand and *what* a squeeze! I don't suppose he meant it, but he has driven the rings into my fingers.

POOR DEAR MAMA.—Has Vermilion come round yet? Oh, yes! Captain Gadsby, don't you think that the saddle is too far forward? (*They pass into the front veranda.*)

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) How the dickens should I know what she prefers? She told me that she doted on horses. (*Aloud.*) I think it is.

MISS T.—(*Coming out into front veranda.*) Oh! Bad Buldoo! I must speak to him for this. He has taken up the curb two links, and Vermilion hates that. (*Passes out and to horse's head.*)

CAPT. G.—Let me do it!

MISS T.—No, Vermilion understands me. Don't you, old man? (*Looses curb-chain skilfully, and pats horse on nose and throttle.*) Poor Vermilion! *Did* they want to cut his chin off? There!

CAPTAIN GADSBY *watches the interlude with undisguised admiration.*

POOR DEAR MAMA.—(*Tartly to Miss T.*) You've forgotten your guest, I think, dear.

MISS T.—Good gracious! So I have! Good-by. (*Retreats indoors hastily.*)

POOR DEAR MAMA.—(*Bunching reins in fingers hampered by too tight gauntlets.*) Captain Gadsby!

CAPT. GADSBY *stoops and makes the foot-rest.*
POOR DEAR MAMA *blunders, halts too long, and breaks through it.*

CAPTAIN G.—(*Aside.*) Can't hold up

eleven stone forever. It's all your rheumatism. (*Aloud.*) Can't imagine why I was so clumsy. (*Aside.*) Now Little Featherweight would have gone up like a bird.

They ride out of the garden. The CAPTAIN falls back.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) How that habit catches her under the arms! Ugh!

POOR DEAR MAMA.—(*With the worn smile of sixteen seasons, the worse for exchange.*) You're dull this afternoon, Captain Gadsby.

CAPT.—(*Spurring up wearily.*) Why did you keep me waiting so long?

Et cætera, et cætera, et cætera.

(AN INTERVAL OF THREE WEEKS.)

GILDED YOUTH.—(*Sitting on railings opposite Town Hall.*) Hullo, Gaddy! 'Been trotting out the Gorgonzola? We all thought it was the Gorgon you're mashing.

CAPT. G.—(*With withering emphasis.*) You young cub! What the —— does it matter to you?

Proceeds to read GILDED YOUTH a lecture on discretion and deportment, which crumples latter like a Chinese Lantern. Departs fuming.

(FURTHER INTERVAL OF FIVE WEEKS.)

SCENE.—*Exterior of New Library on a foggy evening. MISS THREEGAN and MISS DEERCOURT meet among the 'rickshaws. MISS T. is carrying a bundle of books under her left arm.*

MISS D.—(*Level intonation.*) Well?

MISS T.—(*Ascending intonation.*) Well?

MISS D.—(*Capturing her friend's left arm, taking away all the books, placing books in 'rickshaw, returning to arm, securing hand by the third finger and investigating.*) Well! you *bad* girl! And you *never* told me.

MISS T.—(*Demurely.*) He—he—he only spoke yesterday afternoon.

MISS D.—Bless you, dear! And I'm to be bridesmaid, aren't I? You *know* you promised *ever* so long ago.

MISS T.—Of course. I'll tell you all about it to-morrow. (*Gets into 'rickshaw.*) Oh, Emma!

MISS D.—(*With intense interest.*) Yes, dear?

MISS T.— (*Piano.*) It's quite true . . . about . . . the . . . egg.

MISS D.—What egg?

MISS T.— (*Pianissimo prestissimo.*) The egg without the salt. (*Forte.*) *Chalo ghar ko jaldi, jhampani!*

CURTAIN.

THE WORLD WITHOUT.

“CERTAIN people of importance.”

SCENE.—*Smoking-room of the Degchi Club.*
Time 10.30 P. M. of a stuffy night in the Rains. Four men dispersed in picturesque attitudes and easy-chairs. To these enter BLAYNE of the Irregular Moguls, in evening dress.

BLAYNE.—Phew! The Judge ought to be hanged in his own store-godown. Hi, *khitmatgar!* *Poora* whisky-peg, to take the taste out of my mouth.

CURTISS.—(*Royal Artillery.*) That's it, is it? What the deuce made you dine at the Judge's? You know his *bandobust*.

BLAYNE.—'Thought it couldn't be worse than the Club; but I'll swear he buys ullaged liquor and doctors it with gin and ink. (*Looking round the room.*) Is this all of you to-night?

DOONE.—(*P. W. D.*) Anthony was called out at dinner. Mingle had a pain in his tummy.

CURTISS.—Miggy dies of cholera once a week in the Rains, and gets drunk on chloro-

dyne in between. 'Good little chap, though. Any one at the Judge's, Blayne?

BLAYNE.—Cockley and his *memsahib* looking awfully white and fagged. 'Female girl—couldn't catch the name—on her way to the Hills, under the Cockleys' charge—the Judge, and Markyn fresh from Simla—disgustingly fit.

CURTISS.—Good Lord, how truly magnificent! Was there enough ice? When I mangled garbage there I got one whole lump—nearly as big as a walnut. What had Markyn to say for himself?

BLAYNE.—'Seems that every one is having a fairly good time up there in spite of the rain. By Jove, that reminds me! I know I hadn't come across just for the pleasure of your society. News! Great news! Markyn told me.

DOONE.—Who's dead now?

BLAYNE.—No one that I know of; but Gaddy's hooked at last!

DROPPING CHORUS.—How much? The Devil! Markyn was pulling your leg. Not GADDY!

BLAYNE.—“Yea, verily, verily, verily! Verily, verily, I say unto thee.” Theodore, the gift o' God! Our Phillup! It's been given out up above.

MACKESY.—(*Barrister-at-law.*) Huh! Women will give out anything. What does accused say?

BLAYNE.—Markyn told me that he congratulated him warily—one hand held out,

t'other ready to guard. Gaddy turned pink and said it was so.

CURTISS.—Poor old Gaddy! They all do it. Who's *she*? Let's hear the details.

BLAYNE.—She's a girl—daughter of a Colonel Somebody.

DOONE.—Simla's stiff with Colonels' daughters. Be more explicit.

BLAYNE.—Wait a shake. What *was* her name? Three—something. Three—

CURTISS.—Stars, perhaps. Gaddy knows *that* brand.

BLAYNE.—Threegan — Minnie Threegan.

MACKESY.—Threegan! Isn't she a little bit of a girl with red hair?

BLAYNE.—'Bout that—from what Markyn said.

MACKESY.—Then I've met her. She was at Lucknow last season. 'Owned a permanently juvenile Mama, and danced damnably. I say, Jervoise, you knew the Threegans, didn't you?

JERVOISE.—(*Civilian of twenty-five years' service, waking up from his doze.*) Eh! What's that? Knew who? How? I thought I was at Home, confound you!

MACKESY.—The Threegan girl's engaged, so Blayne says.

JERVOISE.—(*Slowly.*) Engaged—engaged! Bless my soul! I'm getting an old man! Little Minnie Threegan engaged! It was only the other day I went home with them in the *Surat*

—no, the *Massilia*—and she was crawling about on her hands and knees among the *ayahs*. 'Used to call me the "*Tick Tack Sahib*" because I showed her my watch. And that was in Sixty-Seven—no, Seventy. Good God, how time flies! I'm an old man. I remember when Threegan married Miss Derwent—daughter of old Hooky Derwent—but that was before your time. And so the little baby's engaged to have a little baby of her own! Who's the other fool?

MACKESY.—Gadsby of the Pink Hussars.

JERVOISE.—'Never met him. Threegan lived in debt, married in debt, and'll die in debt. 'Must be glad to get the girl off his hands.

BLAYNE.—Gaddy has money—lucky devil. Place at Home, too.

DOONE.—He comes of first-class stock. 'Can't quite understand his being caught by a Colonel's daughter, and (*looking cautiously round room*) Black Infantry at that! No offense to you, Blayne.

BLAYNE—(*Stiffly.*) Not much, tha-anks.

CURTISS.—(*Quoting motto of Irregular Moguls.*) "We are what we are," eh, old man? But Gaddy was such a superior animal as a rule. Why didn't he go Home and pick his wife there?

MACKESY.—They are all alike when they come to the turn into the straight. About thirty a man begins to get sick of living alone—

CURTISS.—And of the eternal muttony-chop in the morning.

DOONE.—It's dead goat as a rule, but go on, Mackesy.

MACKESY.—If a man's once taken that way nothing will hold him. Do you remember Benoit of your service, Doone? They transferred him to Tharanda when his time came, and he married a plate-layer's daughter, or something of that kind. She was the only female about the place.

DOONE.—Yes, poor brute. That smashed Benoit's chances altogether. Mrs. Benoit used to ask:—"Was you goin' to the dance this evenin'?"

CURTISS.—Hang it all! Gaddy hasn't married beneath him. There's no tar-brush in the family, I suppose.

JERVOISE.—Tar-brush! Not an anna. You young fellows talk as though the man was doing the girl an honor in marrying her. You're all too conceited—nothing's good enough for you.

BLAYNE.—Not even an empty Club, a dam' bad dinner at the Judge's, and a Station as sickly as a hospital. You're quite right. We're a set of Sybarites.

DOONE.—Luxurious dogs, wallowing in—

CURTISS.— Prickly heat between the shoulders. I'm covered with it. Let's hope Beora will be cooler.

BLAYNE.—Whew! Are *you* ordered into

camp, too? I thought the Gunners had a clean sheet.

CURTISS.—No, worse luck. Two cases yesterday—one died—and if we have a third, out we go. Is there any shooting at Beora, Doone?

DOONE.—The country's under water, except the patch by the Grand Trunk Road. I was there yesterday, looking at a *bund*, and came across four poor devils in their last stage. It's rather bad from here to Kuchara.

CURTISS.—Then we're pretty certain to have a heavy go of it. Heigho! I shouldn't mind changing places with Gaddy for a while. 'Sport with Amaryllis in the shade of the Town Hall, and all that. Oh, why doesn't somebody come and marry me, instead of letting me go into cholera camp?

MACKESY—(*Pointing to notice forbidding dogs in the Club.*) Ask the Committee.

CURTISS. — You irreclaimable ruffian! You'll stand me another peg for that. Blayne, what will you take? Mackesy is fined on moral grounds. Doone, have you any preference?

DOONE. — Small glass Kümmel, please. Excellent carminative, these days. Anthony told me so.

MACKESY—(*Signing voucher for four drinks.*) Most unfair punishment. I only thought of Curtiss as Actæon being chivied round the billiard tables by the nymphs of Diana.

BLAYNE.—Curtiss would have to import his nymphs by train. Mrs. Cockley's the only woman in the Station. She won't leave Cockley, and he's doing his best to get her to go.

CURTISS.—Good, indeed! Here's Mrs. Cockley's health. To the only wife in the Station and a damned brave woman!

OMNES—(*Drinking.*) A damned brave woman!

BLAYNE.—I suppose Gaddy will bring his wife here at the end of the cold weather. They are going to be married almost immediately, I believe.

CURTISS.—Gaddy may thank his luck that the Pink Hussars are all detachment and no headquarters this hot weather, or he'd be torn from the arms of his love as sure as death. Have you ever noticed the thorough-minded way British Cavalry takes to cholera? It's because they are so expensive. If the Pinks had stood fast here, they would have been out in camp a month ago. Yes, I should decidedly like to be Gaddy.

MACKESY.—He'll go Home after he's married, and send in his papers—see if he doesn't.

BLAYNE.—Why shouldn't he? Hasn't he money? Would any of us be here if we weren't paupers?

DOONE.—Poor old pauper! What has become of the six hundred you rooked from our table last month?

BLAYNE.—It took unto itself wings. I think an enterprising tradesman got some of it, and a *shroff* gobbled the rest—or else I spent it.

CURTISS.—Gaddy never had dealings with a *shroff* in his life.

DOONE.—Virtuous Gaddy! If I had three thousand a month, paid from England, I don't think I'd deal with a *shroff* either.

MACKESY—(*Yawning.*) Oh, it's a sweet life! I wonder whether matrimony would make it sweeter.

CURTISS.—Ask Cockley — with his wife dying by inches!

BLAYNE.—Go home and get a fool of a girl to come out to—what is it Thackeray says? —“the splendid palace of an Indian pro-consul.”

DOONE.—Which reminds me. My quarters leak like a sieve. I had fever last night from sleeping in a swamp. And the worst of it is, one can't do anything to a roof till the Rains are over.

CURTISS.—What's wrong with you? *You* haven't eighty rotting Tommies to take into a running stream.

DOONE.—No: but I'm a compost of boils and bad language. I'm a regular Job all over my body. It's sheer poverty of blood, and I don't see any chance of getting richer—either way.

BLAYNE.—Can't you take leave?

30 The Story of the Gadsbys

DOONE.—That's the pull you Army men have over us. Ten days are nothing in your sight. *I'm* so important that Government can't find a substitute if I go away. Ye-es, I'd like to be Gaddy, whoever his wife may be.

CURTISS.—You've passed the turn of life that Mackesy was speaking of.

DOONE.—Indeed I have, but I never yet had the brutality to ask a woman to share my life out here.

BLAYNE.—On my soul I believe you're right. I'm thinking of Mrs. Cockley. The woman's an absolute wreck.

DOONE.—Exactly. Because she stays down here. The only way to keep her fit would be to send her to the Hills for eight months—and the same with any woman. I fancy I see myself taking a wife on those terms.

MACKESY.—With the rupee at one and sixpence. The little Doones would be little Dehra Doones, with a fine Mussoorie *chi-chi* to bring home for the holidays.

CURTISS.—And a pair of be-ewtiful *sam bhur*-horns for Doone to wear, free of expense, presented by—

DOONE.—Yes, it's an enchanting prospect. By the way, the rupee hasn't done falling yet. The time will come when we shall think ourselves lucky if we only lose half our pay.

CURTISS.—Surely a third's loss enough.

Who gains by the arrangement ? That's what I want to know.

BLAYNE.—The Silver Question ! I'm going to bed if you begin squabbling. Thank Goodness, here's Anthony—looking like a ghost.

Enter Anthony, Indian Medical Staff, very white and tired.

ANTHONY.—'Evening, Blayne. It's raining in sheets. *Peg lao, khitmatgar.* The roads are something ghastly.

CURTISS.—How's Mingle ?

ANTHONY.—Very bad, and more frightened. I handed him over to Fewton. Mingle might just as well have called him in the first place, instead of bothering me.

BLAYNE.—He's a nervous little chap. What has he got this time ?

ANTHONY.—Can't quite say. A very bad tummy and a blue funk so far. He asked me at once if it was cholera, and I told him not to be a fool. That soothed him.

CURTISS.—Poor devil ! The funk does half the business in a man of that build.

ANTHONY.—(*Lighting a cheroot.*) I firmly believe the funk will kill him if he stays down. You know the amount of trouble he's been giving Fewton for the last three weeks. He's doing his very best to frighten himself into the grave.

GENERAL CHORUS.—Poor little devil ! Why doesn't he get away ?

ANTHONY.—'Can't. He has his leave all

32 The Story of the Gadsbys

right, but he's so dipped he can't take it, and I don't think his name on paper would raise four annas. That's in confidence, hough.

MACKESY.—All the Station knows it.

ANTHONY.—“ I suppose I shall have to die here,” he said, squirming all across the bed. He's quite made up his mind to Kingdom Come. And I *know* he has nothing more than a wet-weather tummy if he could only keep a hand on himself.

BLAYNE.—That's bad. That's *very* bad. Poor little Miggy. Good little chap, too. I say—

ANTHONY.—What do you say ?

BLAYNE.—Well, look here—anyhow. If it's like that—as you say—I say fifty.

CURTISS.—I say fifty.

MACKESY.—I go twenty better.

DOONE.—Bloated Cræsus of the Bar! I say fifty. Jervoise, what do you say? Hi! Wake up!

JERVOISE.—Eh! What's that? What's that?

CURTISS.—We want a hundred dibs from you. You're a bachelor drawing a gigantic income, and there's a man in a hole.

JERVOISE.—What man? Any one dead?

BLAYNE.—No, but he'll die if you don't give the hundred. Here! Here's a peg-voucher. You can see what we've signed for, and a *chaprassi* will come round to-morrow to collect it. So there will be no trouble.

JERVOISE—(*signing*). One hundred, E. M. J. There you are. (*Feebly.*) It isn't one of your jokes, is it?

BLAYNE.—No, it really *is* wanted. Anthony, you were the biggest poker-winner last week, and you've defrauded the tax-collector too long. Sign!

ANTHONY.—Let's see. Three fifties and a seventy—two twenty—three twenty—say four twenty. That'll give him a month clear at the Hills. Many thanks, you men. I'll send round the *chaprassi* to-morrow.

CURTISS.—You must engineer his taking the stuff, and of course you mustn't—

ANTHONY.—*Of* course. It would never do. He'd weep with gratitude over his evening drink.

BLAYNE.—That's just what he would do, damn him. Oh! I say, Anthony, you pretend to know everything. Have you heard about Gaddy?

ANTHONY.—No. Divorce Court at last?

BLAYNE.—Worse. He's engaged.

ANTHONY.—How much? He *can't* be!

BLAYNE.—He *is*. He's going to be married in a few weeks. Markyn told me at the Judge's this evening. It's *pukka*.

ANTHONY.—You don't say so? Holy Moses! There'll be a shine in the tents of Kedar.

CURTISS.—'Regiment cut up rough, think you?

34 The Story of the Gadsbys

ANTHONY.—'Don't know anything about the Regiment.

MACKESY.—It is bigamy, then?

ANTHONY.—Maybe. Do you mean to say that you men have forgotten or is there more charity in the world than I thought?

DOONE.—You don't look pretty when you are trying to keep a secret. You bloat. Explain.

ANTHONY.—Mrs. Herriott!

BLAYNE—(*After a long pause, to the room generally*). It's my notion that we are a set of fools.

MACKESY.—Nonsense. *That* business was knocked on the head last season. Why, young Mallard—

ANTHONY.—Mallard was a candlestick, paraded as such. Think a while. Recollect last season and the talk then. Mallard or no Mallard, did Gaddy ever talk to any other woman?

CURTISS.—There's something in that. It *was* slightly noticeable now you come to mention it. But she's at Naini Tal and he's at Simla.

ANTHONY.—He had to go to Simla to look after a globe-trotter relative of his—a person with a title. Uncle or aunt.

BLAYNE.—And there he got engaged. No law prevents a man growing tired of a woman.

ANTHONY.—Except that he mustn't do it till

the woman is tired of him. And the Herriott woman was not that.

CURTISS.—She may be now. Two months of Naini Tal work wonders.

DOONE.—Curious thing how some women carry a Fate with them. There was a Mrs. Deegie in the Central Provinces whose men invariably fell away and got married. It became a regular proverb with us when I was down there. I remember three men desperately devoted to her, and they all, one after another, took wives.

CURTISS.—That's odd. Now I should have thought that Mrs. Deegie's influence would have led them to take other men's wives. It ought to have made them afraid of the judgment of Providence.

ANTHONY.—Mrs. Herriott will make Gaddy afraid of something more than the judgment of Providence, I fancy.

BLAYNE.—Supposing things are as you say, he'll be a fool to face her. He'll sit tight at Simla.

ANTHONY.—'Shouldn't be a bit surprised if he went off to Naini to explain. He's an unaccountable sort of man, and she's likely to be a more than unaccountable woman.

DOONE.—What makes you take her character away so confidently?

ANTHONY.—*Primum tempus*. Gaddy was her first, and a woman doesn't allow her first man to drop away without expostulation. She

36 The Story of the Gadsbys

justifies the first transfer of affection to herself by swearing that it is forever and ever. Consequently . . .

BLAYNE.—Consequently, we are sitting here till past one o'clock, talking scandal like a set of Station cats. Anthony, it's all your fault. We were perfectly respectable till you came in. Go to bed. I'm off. Good night all.

CURTISS.—Past one! It's past two, by Jove, and here's the *khit* coming for the late charge. Just Heavens! One, two, three, four, *five* rupees to pay for the pleasure of saying that a poor little beast of a woman is no better than she should be. I'm ashamed of myself. Go to bed, you slanderous villains, and if I'm sent to Beora to-morrow, be prepared to hear I'm dead before paying my card-account!

CURTAIN.

THE TENTS OF KEDAR.

ONLY why should it be with pain at all,
Why must I 'twixt the leaves of coronal
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why should the other women know so much,
And talk together:—Such the look and such
The smile he used to love with, then as now.
Any Wife to any Husband.

SCENE.—*A Naini Tal dinner for thirty-four. Plate, wines, crockery, and khitmatgars carefully calculated to scale of Rs. 6,000 per mensem, less exchange. Table split lengthways by banks of flowers.*

MRS. HERRIOTT.—*(After conversation has risen to proper pitch.)* Ah! 'Didn't see you in the crush in the drawing-room. *(Sotto voce.)* Where have you been all this while, Pip?

CAPTAIN GADSBY.—*(Turning from regularly ordained dinner partner and settling hock glasses.)* Good evening. *(Sotto voce.)* Not quite so loud another time. You've no notion how your voice carries. *(Aside.)* So much for shirking the written explanation. It'll have to be a verbal one now. Sweet

38 The Story of the Gadsbys

prospect! How on earth am I to tell her that I am a respectable, engaged member of society and it's all over between us?

MRS. H.—I've a heavy score against you. Where were you at the Monday Pop? Where were you on Tuesday? Where were you at the Lamonts' tennis? I was looking everywhere.

Capt. G.—For me? Oh, I was alive somewhere, I suppose. (*Aside.*) It's for Minnie's sake, but it's going to be dashed unpleasant.

MRS. H.—Have I done anything to offend you? I never meant it if I have. I couldn't help going for a ride with the Vaynor man. It was promised a week before you came up.

CAPT. G.—I didn't know—

MRS. H.—It really *was*.

CAPT. G.—Anything about it, I mean.

MRS. H.—What has upset you to-day? All these days? You haven't been near me for four whole days—nearly one hundred hours. Was it *kind* of you, Pip? And I've been looking forward so much to your coming.

CAPT. G.—Have you?

MRS. H.—You *know* I have! I've been as foolish as a schoolgirl about it. I made a little calendar and put it in my card-case, and every time the twelve o'clock gun went off I scratched out a square and said:—"That brings me nearer to Pip. *My Pip!*"

CAPT. G.—(*With an uneasy laugh.*) What will Mackler think if you neglect him so?

MRS. H.—And it hasn't brought you nearer. You seem farther away than ever. Are you sulking about something? I know your temper.

CAPT. G.—No.

MRS. H.—Have I grown old in the last few months, then? (*Reaches forward to bank of flowers for menu-card.*)

PARTNER ON LEFT.—Allow me. (*Hands menu-card. MRS. H. keeps her arm at full stretch for three seconds.*)

MRS. H.—(*To partner.*) Oh, thanks. I didn't see. (*Turns right again.*) Is anything in me changed at all?

CAPT. G.—For Goodness' sake go on with your dinner! You must eat something. Try one of those cutlet arrangements. (*Aside.*) And I fancied she had good shoulders, once upon a time! What an ass a man can make of himself!

MRS. H.—(*Helping herself to a paper frill, seven peas, some stamped carrots and a spoonful of gravy.*) That isn't an answer. Tell me whether I have done anything.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) If it isn't ended here there will be a ghastly scene somewhere else. If only I'd written to her and stood the racket—at long range! (*To khitmatgar.*) *Han! Simpkin do.* (*Aloud.*) I'll tell you later on.

MRS. H.—Tell me *now*. It must be some

foolish misunderstanding, and you know that there was to be nothing of that sort between us! *We*, of all people in the world, can't afford it. Is it the Vaynor man, and don't you like to say so? On my honor—

CAPT. G.—I haven't given the Vaynor man a thought.

MRS. H.—But how d'you know that *I* haven't?

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) Here's my chance and may the Devil help me through with it. (*Aloud and measuredly.*) Believe me, I do not care how often or how tenderly you think of the Vaynor man.

MRS. H.—I wonder if you mean that.—Oh, what *is* the good of squabbling and pretending to misunderstand when you are only up for so short a time? Pip, don't be a stupid!

Follows a pause, during which he crosses his left leg over his right and continues his dinner.

CAPT. G.—(*In answer to the thunderstorm in her eyes.*) Corns—my worst.

MRS. H.—Upon my word, you are the very rudest man in the world! I'll *never* do it again.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) No, I don't think you will; but I wonder what you will do before it's all over. (*To khitmatgar.*) *Thorah our Simpkin do.*

MRS. H.—Well! Haven't you the grace to apologize, bad man?

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) I mustn't let it drift

back *now*. Trust a woman for being as blind as a bat when she won't see.

MRS. H.—I'm waiting : or would you like me to dictate a form of apology ?

CAPT. G.—(*Desperately.*) By all means dictate.

MRS. H.—(*Lightly.*) Very well. Rehearse your several Christian names after me and go on :—“ Profess my sincere repentance.”

CAPT. G.—“ Sincere repentance.”

MRS. H.—“ For having behaved—”

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) At last ! I wish to Goodness she'd look away. “ For having behaved ”—as I have behaved, and declare that I am thoroughly and heartily sick of the whole business, and take this opportunity of making clear my intention of ending it, now, henceforward, and forever. (*Aside.*) If any one had told me I should be such a black-guard . . . !

MRS. H.—(*Shaking a spoonful of potato-chips into her plate.*) That's not a pretty joke.

CAPT. G.—No. It's a reality. (*Aside.*) I wonder if smashes of this kind are always so raw.

MRS. H.—Really, Pip, you're getting more absurd every day.

CAPT. G.—I don't think you quite understand me. Shall I repeat it ?

MRS. H.—No ! For pity's sake don't do that. It's too terrible, even in fun.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) I'll let her think it

over for a while. But I ought to be horse-whipped.

MRS. H.—I want to know what you meant by what you said just now.

CAPT. G.—Exactly what I said. No less.

MRS. H.—But what have I done to deserve it? What *have* I done?

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) If she only wouldn't look at me. (*Aloud and very slowly, his eyes on his plate.*) D'you remember that evening in July, before the Rains broke, when you said that the end would have to come sooner or later . . . and you wondered for which of us it would come first?

MRS. H.—Yes! I was only joking. And you swore that, as long as there was breath in your body, it should *never* come. And I believed you.

CAPT. G.—(*Fingering menu-card.*) Well, it has. That's all.

A long pause, during which MRS. H. bows her head and rolls the bread-twist into little pellets : G. stares at the oleanders.

MRS. H.—(*Throwing back her head and laughing naturally.*) They train us women well, don't they, Pip?

CAPT. G.—(*Brutally, touching shirt-stud.*) So far as the expression goes. (*Aside.*) It isn't in her nature to take things quietly. There'll be an explosion yet.

MRS. H.—(*With a shudder.*) Thank you. B-but red Indians allow people to wriggle

when they're being tortured, I believe. (*Slips fan from girdle and fans slowly: rim of fan level with chin.*)

PARTNER ON LEFT.—Very close to-night, isn't it? You find it too much for you?

MRS. H.—Oh, no, not in the least. But they really ought to have punkahs, even in your cool Naini Tal, oughtn't they? (*Turns, dropping fan and raising eyebrows.*)

CAPT. G.—It's all right. (*Aside.*) Here comes the storm!

MRS. H.—(*Her eyes on the tablecloth: fan ready in right hand.*) It was very cleverly managed, Pip, and I congratulate you. You swore—you never contented yourself with merely saying a thing—you *swore* that, as far as lay in your power, you'd make my wretched life pleasant for me. And you've denied me the consolation of breaking down. I should have done it—indeed I should. A woman would hardly have thought of this refinement, my kind, considerate friend. (*Fan-guard as before.*) You have explained things so tenderly and truthfully, too! You haven't spoken or written a word of warning, and you have let me believe in you till the last minute. You haven't condescended to give me your *reason* yet. No! A woman could not have managed it half so well. Are there many *men* like you in the world?

CAPT. G.—I'm sure I don't know. (*To khitmatgar.*) Ohé! *Simpkin do.*

44 The Story of the Gadsbys

MRS. H.—You call yourself a man of the world, don't you? Do men of the world behave like Devils when they do a woman the honor to get tired of her?

CAPT. G.—I'm sure I don't know. Don't speak so loud!

MRS. H.—Keep us respectable, O Lord, whatever happens! Don't be afraid of my compromising you. You've chosen your ground far too well, and I've been properly brought up. (*Lowering fan.*) Haven't you *any* pity, Pip, except for yourself?

CAPT. G.—Wouldn't it be rather impertinent of me to say that I'm sorry for you?

MRS. H.—I think you have said it once or twice before. You're growing very careful of my feelings. My God, Pip, I was a good woman once! You *said* I was. You've made me what I am. What are you going to do with me? What are you going to do with me? Won't you *say* that you are sorry? (*Helps herself to iced asparagus.*)

CAPT. G.—I am sorry for you, if you want the pity of such a brute as I am. I'm *awf'ly* sorry for you.

MRS. H.—Rather tame for a man of the world. Do you think that that admission clears you?

CAPT. G.—What can I do? I can only tell you what I think of myself. You can't think worse than that?

MRS. H.—Oh, yes, I can! And now, will you tell me the reason of all this? Remorse? Has Bayard been suddenly conscience-stricken?

CAPT. G.—(*Angrily, his eyes still lowered.*) No! The thing has come to an end on my side. That's all. *Mafisch!*

MRS. H.—“That's all. *Mafisch!*” As though I were a Cairene Dragoman. You used to make prettier speeches. D'you remember when you said . . . ?

CAPT. G.—For Heaven's sake don't bring that back! Call me anything you like and I'll admit it—

MRS. H.—But you don't care to be reminded of old lies? If I could hope to hurt you one-tenth as much as you have hurt me to-night . . . No, I wouldn't—I couldn't do it—liar though you are.

CAPT. G.—I've spoken the truth.

MRS. H.—My *dear* Sir, you flatter yourself. You have lied over the reason. Pip, remember that I know you as you don't know yourself. You have been everything to me, though you are . . . (*Fan-guard.*) Oh, what a contemptible *Thing* it is! And so you are merely tired of me?

CAPT. G.—Since you insist upon my repeating it—Yes.

MRS. H.—Lie the first. I wish I knew a coarser word. Lie seems so ineffectual in your case. The fire has just died out and

46 The Story of the Gadsbys

there is no fresh one? Think for a minute, Pip, if you care whether I despise you more than I do. Simply *Mafisch*, is it?

CAPT. G.—Yes. (*Aside.*) I think I deserve this.

MRS. H.—Lie number two. Before the next glass chokes you, tell me her name.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) I'll make her pay for dragging Minnie into the business! (*Aloud.*) Is it likely?

MRS. H.—*Very* likely if you thought that it would flatter your vanity. You'd cry my name on the housetops to make people turn round.

CAPT. G.—I wish I had. There would have been an end of this business.

MRS. H.—Oh, no, there would not. . . . And so you were going to be virtuous and *blasé*, were you? To come to me and say:—"I've done with you. The incident is closed." I ought to be proud of having kept such a man so long.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) It only remains to pray for the end of the dinner. (*Aloud.*) You know what I think of myself.

MRS. H.—As it's the only person in the world you ever *do* think of, and as I know your mind thoroughly, I do. You want to get it all over and. . . . Oh, I can't keep you back! And you're going—think of it. Pip—to throw me over for another woman. And you swore that all other women were. . . . Pip, my Pip!

She *can't* care for you as I do. Believe me, she can't. Is it any one that I know?

CAPT. G.—Thank Goodness it isn't. (*Aside.*) I expected a cyclone, but not an earthquake.

MRS. H.—She *can't*! Is there anything that I wouldn't do for you—or haven't done? And to think that I should take this trouble over you, knowing what you are! Do you despise me for it?

CAPT. G.—(*Wiping his mouth to hide a smile.*) *Again?* It's entirely a work of charity on your part.

MRS. H.—Ahhh! But I have no right to resent it. . . . Is she better-looking than I? Who was it said—?

CAPT. G.—No—not that!

MRS. H.—I'll be more merciful than you were. Don't you know that all women are alike?

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) Then this is the exception that proves the rule.

MRS. H.—*All* of them! I'll tell you anything you like. I will, upon my word! They only want the admiration—from anybody—no matter who—anybody! But there is always *one* man that they care for more than any one else in the world, and would sacrifice all the others to. Oh, *do* listen! I've kept the Vaynor man trotting after me like a poodle, and he believes that he is the only man I am interested in. I'll tell you what he said to me.

48 The Story of the Gadsbys

CAPT. G.—Spare him. (*Aside.*) I wonder what *his* version is.

MRS. H.—He's been waiting for me to look at him all through dinner. Shall I do it, and you can see what an idiot he looks?

CAPT. G.—“But what imports the nomination of this gentleman?”

MRS. H.—Watch! (*Sends a glance to the Vaynor man, who tries vainly to combine a mouthful of ice-pudding, a smirk of self-satisfaction, a glare of intense devotion, and the stolidity of a British dining countenance.*)

CAPT. G.—(*Critically.*) He doesn't look pretty. Why didn't you wait till the spoon was out of his mouth?

MRS. H.—To amuse you. She'll make an exhibition of you as I've made of him; and people will laugh at you. Oh, Pip, can't you *see* that? It's as plain as the noonday sun. You'll be trotted about and told lies, and made a fool of like the others. *I* never made a fool of you, did I?

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) What a clever little woman it is!

MRS. H.—Well, what have you to say?

CAPT. G.—I feel better.

MRS. H.—Yes, I suppose so, after I have come down to your level. I couldn't have done it if I hadn't cared for you so much. I have spoken the truth.

CAPT. G.—It doesn't alter the situation.

MRS. H.—(*Passionately.*) Then she *has*

said that she cares for you! Don't believe her, Pip. It's a lie—as black as yours to me!

CAPT. G.—Ssssteady! I've a notion that a friend of yours is looking at you.

MRS. H.—He! I *hate* him. He introduced you to me.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) And some people would like women to assist in making the laws. Introduction to imply condonement. (*Aloud.*) Well, you see, if you can remember so far back as that, I couldn't, in common politeness, refuse the offer.

MRS. H.—In common politeness! We have got beyond *that*!

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) Old ground means fresh trouble. (*Aloud.*) On my honor—

MRS. H.—Your *what*? Ha, ha!

CAPT. G.—Dishonor, then. She's not what you imagine. I meant to—

MRS. H.—Don't tell me anything about her! She *won't* care for you, and when you come back, after having made an exhibition of yourself, you'll find me occupied with—

CAPT. G.—(*Insolently.*) You couldn't while I am alive. (*Aside.*) If that doesn't bring her pride to her rescue, nothing will.

MRS. H.—(*Drawing herself up.*) Couldn't do it? *I*? (*Softening.*) You're right. I don't believe I could—though you are what you are—a coward and a liar in grain.

CAPT. G.—It doesn't hurt so much after your little lecture—with demonstrations.

50 The Story of the Gadsbys

MRS. H.—One mass of vanity! Will nothing *ever* touch you in this life? There must be a Hereafter if it's only for the benefit of . . . But you will have it all to yourself.

CAPT. G.—(*Under his eyebrows.*) Are you so certain of that?

MRS. H.—I shall have had mine in this life; and it will serve me right.

CAPT. G.—But the admiration that you insisted on so strongly a moment ago? (*Aside.*) Oh, I *am* a brute!

MRS. H.—(*Fiercely.*) Will *that* console me for knowing that you will go to her with the same words, the same arguments, and the—the same pet names you used to me? And if she cares for you, you two will laugh over my story. Won't that be punishment heavy enough even for me—even for me? . . . And it's all useless. That's another punishment.

CAPT. G.—(*Feebly.*) Oh, come! I'm not so low as you think.

MRS. H.—Not now, perhaps, but you will be. Oh, Pip, if a woman flatters your vanity, there's nothing on earth that you would not tell her; and no meanness that you would not do. Have I known you so long without knowing that?

CAPT. G.—If you can trust me in nothing else—and I don't see why I should be trusted—you can count upon my holding my tongue.

MRS. H.—If you denied everything you've said this evening and declared it was all in fun

(*a long pause*), I'd trust you. Not otherwise. All I ask is, don't tell her my name. *Please* don't. A man might forget: a woman never would. (*Looks up table and sees hostess beginning to collect eyes.*) So it's all ended, through no fault of mine. . . . Haven't I behaved beautifully? I've accepted your dismissal, and you managed it as cruelly as you could, and I have made you respect my sex, haven't I? (*Arranging gloves and fan.*) I only pray that she'll know you some day as I know you now. I wouldn't be you then, for I think even your conceit will be hurt. I hope she'll pay you back the humiliation you've brought on me. I hope. . . . No. I don't. I *can't* give you up! I must have something to look forward to or I shall go crazy. When it's all over, come back to me, come back to me, and you'll find that you're my Pip still!

CAPT. G.—(*Very clearly.*) 'False move, and you pay for it. It's a girl!

MRS. H.—(*Rising.*) Then it *was* true! They said . . . but I wouldn't insult you by asking. A girl! *I* was a girl not very long ago. Be good to her Pip. I dare say she believes in you.

Goes out with an uncertain smile. He watches her through the door, and settles into a chair as the men redistribute themselves.

CAPT. G.—Now, if there is any Power who looks after this world, will He kindly tell me what I have done? (*Reaching out for the claret, and half aloud.*) What *have* I done?

WITH ANY AMAZEMENT.

“AND are not afraid with any amazement.”
Marriage Service.

SCENE.—*A bachelor's bedroom—toilet-table arranged with unnatural neatness. Captain Gadsby asleep and snoring heavily. Time, 10.30. A. M.—a glorious autumn day at Simla. Enter delicately Captain Mafflin of Gadsby's regiment. Looks at sleeper, and shakes his head murmuring “Poor Gaddy.” Performs violent fantasia with hair-brushes on chair-back.*

Capt. M.—Wake up, my sleeping beauty!
(*Howls.*)

“Uprouse ye, then, my merry merry men!
It is our opening day!
It is our opening da-ay!”

Gaddy, the little dicky-birds have been billing and cooing for ever so long; and I'm here!

CAPT. G. — (*Sitting up and yawning.*)
'Mornin'. This is awf'ly good of you, old fellow. Most awf'ly good of you. Don't know what I should do without you. 'Pon

my soul, I don't. 'Haven't slept a wink all night.

CAPT. M.—I didn't get in till half-past eleven. 'Had a look at you then, and you seemed to be sleeping as soundly as a condemned criminal.

CAPT. G.—Jack, if you want to make those disgustingly worn-out jokes, you'd better go away. (*With portentous gravity.*) It's the happiest day in my life.

CAPT. M.—(*Chuckling grimly.*) Not by a very long chalk, my son. You're going through some of the most refined torture you've ever known. But be calm. *I am with you. 'Shun. Dress!*

CAPT. G.—Eh! Wha-at?

CAPT. M.—*Do* you suppose that you are your own master for the next twelve hours? If you *do*, of course . . . (*Makes for the door.*)

CAPT. G.—No! For Goodness' sake, old man, don't do that! You'll see me through, won't you? I've been mugging up that beastly drill, and can't remember a line of it.

CAPT. M.—(*Overhauling G.'s uniform.*)—Go and tub. Don't bother me. I'll give you ten minutes to dress in.

Interval, filled by the noise as of a healthy grampus splashing in the bath-room.

CAPT. G.—(*Emerging from dressing-room.*) What time is it?

CAPT. M.—Nearly eleven.

CAPT. G.—Five hours more. O Lord!

54 The Story of the Gadsbys

CAPT. M.—(*Aside.*) 'First sign of funk, that. 'Wonder if it's going to spread. (*Aloud.*) Come along to breakfast.

CAPT. G.—I can't eat anything. I don't want any breakfast.

CAPT. M.—(*Aside.*) So early! (*Aloud.*) Captain Gadsby, I *order* you to eat breakfast, and a dashed good breakfast, too. None of your bridal airs and graces with me!

Leads G. down-stairs, and stands over him while he eats two chops.

CAPT. G.—(*Who has looked at his watch thrice in the last five minutes.*) What time is it?

CAPT. M.—Time to come for a walk. Light up.

CAPT. G.—I haven't smoked for ten days, and I won't *now*. (*Takes cheroot which M. has cut for him, and blows smoke through his nose luxuriously.*) We aren't going down the Mall, are we?

CAPT. M.—(*Aside.*) They're all alike in these stages. (*Aloud.*) No, my Vestal. We're going along the quietest road we can find.

CAPT. G.—Any chance of seeing Her?

CAPT. M.—Innocent! No! Come along, and, if you want me for the final obsequies, don't cut my eye out with your stick.

CAPT. G.—(*Spinning round.*) I say, isn't She the dearest creature that ever walked? What's the time? What comes after "wilt thou take this woman?"

CAPT. M.—You go for the ring. R'collect it'll be on the top of my right-hand little finger, and just be careful how you draw it off, because I shall have the Verger's fees somewhere in my glove.

CAPT. G.—(*Walking forward hastily.*)—D—— the Verger! Come along! It's past twelve, and I haven't seen Her since yesterday evening. (*Spinning round again.*) She's an absolute angel, Jack, and she's a dashed deal too good for me. Look here, does she come up the aisle on my arm, or how?

CAPT. M.—If I thought that there was the least chance of your remembering anything for two consecutive minutes, I'd tell you. Stop passaging about like that!

CAPT. G.—(*Halting in the middle of the road.*) I say, Jack.

CAPT. M.—Keep quiet for another ten minutes if you can, you lunatic, and *walk!*

The two tramp at five miles an hour for fifteen minutes.

CAPT. G.—What's the time? How about that cursed wedding-cake and the slippers? They don't throw 'em about in church do they?

CAPT. M.—In-variably. The Padre leads off with his boots.

CAPT. G.—Confound your silly soul! Don't make fun of me. I can't stand it, and I won't!

CAPT. M. — (*Untroubled.*) So-ooo, old

56 The Story of the Gadsbys

horse! You'll have to sleep for a couple of hours this afternoon.

CAPT. G. — (*Spinning round.*) I'm *not* going to be treated like a dashed child. Understand that!

CAPT. M.—(*Aside.*) Nerves gone to fiddle-strings. What a day we're having. (*Tenderly putting his hand on G.'s shoulder.*) My David, how long have you known this Jonathan? Would I come up here to make a fool of you—after all these years?

CAPT. G.—(*Penitently.*) I know, I know, Jack—but I'm as upset as I can be. Don't mind what I say. Just hear me run through the drill and see if I've got it all right:

“To have and to hold for better or worse, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end so help me, God.—Amen.”

CAPT. M.—(*Suffocating with suppressed laughter.*) Yes. That's about the gist of it. I'll prompt if you get into a hat.

CAPT. G. (*Earnestly.*) Yes, you'll stick by me, Jack, won't you? I'm awf'ly happy, but I don't mind telling *you* that I'm in a blue funk!

CAPT. M.—(*Gravely.*) Are you? I should never have noticed it. You don't *look* like it.

CAPT. G. — Don't I? That's all right. (*Spinning round.*) On my soul and honor, Jack, She's the sweetest little angel that ever

came down from the sky. There isn't a woman on earth fit to speak to Her!

CAPT. M.—(*Aside*)—And this is old Gaddy!
(*Aloud.*) Go on if it relieves you.

CAPT. G.—You can laugh! That's all you wild asses of bachelors are fit for.

CAPT. M.—(*Drawling.*) You never *would* wait for the troop to come up. You aren't quite married yet, y' know.

CAPT. G.—Ugh! That reminds me, I don't believe I shall be able to get into my boots. Let's go home and try 'em on!
(*Hurries forward.*)

CAPT. M.—'Wouldn't be in *your* shoes for anything that Asia has to offer.

CAPT. G.—(*Spinning round.*) That just shows your hideous blackness of soul—your dense stupidity—your brutal narrow-mindedness. There's only one fault about you. You're the best of good fellows, and I don't know what I should have done without you, but—you aren't married. (*Wags his head gravely.*) Take a wife, Jack.

CAPT. M.—(*With a face like a wall.*)
Ya-as. Whose for choice?

CAPT. G.—If you're going to be a black-guard, I'm going on . . . What's the time?

CAPT. M. (*Hums*)—

“An' since it was very clear we drank only ginger-beer, Faith, there must ha' been some stings in the ginger.”

Come back, you maniac. I'm going to

58 The Story of the Gadsbys

take you home, and you're going to lie down.

CAPT. G.—What on earth do I want to lie down for?

CAPT. M.—Give me a light from your cheroot and see.

CAPT. G.—(*Watching cheroot-butt quiver like a tuning-fork.*) Sweet state I'm in!

CAPT. M.—You are. I'll get you a peg and you'll go to sleep.

They return and M. compounds a four-finger peg.

CAPT. G.—O, *bus! bus!* It'll make me as drunk as an owl.

CAPT. M.—'Curious thing, 'twont have the slightest effect on you. Drink it off, chuck yourself down there, and go to bye-bye.

CAPT. G.—It's absurd. I shan't sleep. I *know* I shan't!

Falls into heavy doze at end of seven minutes.

CAPT. M. *watches him tenderly.*

CAPT. M.—Poor old Gaddy! I've seen a few turned off before, but never one who went to the gallows in this condition. 'Can't tell how it affects 'em, though. It's the thoroughbreds that sweat when they're backed into double-harness. . . . And that's the man who went through the guns at Amdheran like a devil possessed of devils. (*Leans over G.*) But this is worse than the guns, old pal—worse than the guns, isn't it? (*G. turns in his sleep, and M. touches him clumsily on the forehead.*) Poor, dear, old Gaddy! Going

like the rest of 'em—going like the rest of 'em . . . Friend that sticketh closer than a brother . . . eight years! Dashed bit of a slip of a girl . . . eight weeks! And—where's your friend. (*Smokes disconsolately till church clock strikes three.*)

CAPT. M.—Up with you! Get into your kit.

CAPT. G.—Already? Isn't it too soon? Hadn't I better have a shave?

CAPT. M.—*No!* You're all right. (*Aside.*) He'd chip his chin to pieces.

CAPT. G.—What's the hurry?

CAPT. M.—You've got to be there first.

CAPT. G.—To be stared at?

CAPT. M.—Exactly. You're part of the show. Where's the burnisher? Your spurs are in a shameful state.

CAPT. G.—(*Gruffly.*) Jack, I be damned if you shall do that for me.

CAPT. M.—(*More gruffly.*) Dry up and get dressed! If I choose to clean your spurs, you're under *my* orders.

CAPT. G. *dresses.* M. *follows suit.*

CAPT. M.—(*Critically, walking round.*) M'yes, you'll do. Only don't look so like a criminal. Ring, gloves, fees—that's all right for me. Let your mustache alone. Now, if the tats are ready, we'll go.

CAPT. G.—(*Nervously.*) It's much too soon. Let's light up! Let's have a peg! Let's—

60 The Story of the Gadsbys

CAPT. M.—Let's make bally asses of ourselves.

BELLS.—(*Without.*)

Good—peo—ple—all
To prayers—we call.

CAPT. M.—There go the bells! Come on—unless you'd rather not. (*They ride off.*)

BELLS.—

We honor the King
And Bride's joy do bring—
Good tidings we tell
And ring the Dead's knell.

CAPT. G.—(*Dismounting at the door of the Church.*) I say, aren't we much too soon? There are no end of people inside. I say, aren't we much too late? Stick by me, Jack! What the devil do I do?

CAPT. M.—Strike an attitude at the head of the aisle and wait for Her. (*G. groans as M. wheels him into position before three hundred eyes.*)

CAPT. M.—(*Imploringly.*) Gaddy, if you love me, for pity's sake, for the Honor of the Regiment, stand up! Chuck yourself into your uniform! Look like a man! I've got to speak to the Padre a minute. (*G. breaks into a gentle perspiration.*) If you wipe your face I'll never be your best man again. Stand up! (*G. trembles visibly.*)

CAPT. M.—(*Returning.*) She's coming

now. Look out when the music starts. There's the organ beginning to clack.

Bride steps out of 'rickshaw at Church door.

G. catches a glimpse of her and takes heart.

ORGAN.—(*Diapason and bourdon.*)

The Voice that breathed o'er Eden,
That earliest marriage day,
The primal marriage blessing,
It hath not passed away.

CAPT. M.—(*Watching G.*) By Jove! He *is* looking well. Didn't think he had it in him.

CAPT. G.—How long does this hymn go on for?

CAPT. M.—It will be over directly. (*Anxiously.*) Beginning to bleach and gulp? Hold on, Gaddy, and think o' the Regiment.

CAPT. G.—(*Measuredly.*) I say, there's a big brown lizard crawling up that wall.

CAPT. M.—My Sainted Mother! The last stage of collapse!

Bride comes up to left of altar, lifts her eyes once to G., who is suddenly smitten mad.

CAPT. G.—(*To himself again and again.*) Little Featherweight's a woman—a woman! And I thought she was a little girl.

CAPT. M.—(*In a whisper.*) From the halt—inward wheel.

CAPT. G. *obeys mechanically and the ceremony proceeds.*

62 The Story of the Gadsbys

PADRE.— . . . only unto her as long as ye both shall live?

CAPT. G.—(*His throat useless.*) Ha—hmmm!

CAPT. M.—Say you will or you won't. There's no second deal here.

Bride gives response with perfect coolness, and is given away by the father.

CAPT. G.—(*Thinking to show his learning.*) Jack, give me away now, *quick!*

CAPT. M.—You've given yourself away quite enough. Her *right* hand, man! Repeat! Repeat! "Theodore Philip." Have you forgotten your own name?

CAPT. G. *stumbles through Affirmation, which Bride repeats without a tremor.*

CAPT. M.—Now the ring! Follow the Padre! Don't pull off my glove! Here it is! Great Cupid, he's found his voice!

G. *repeats Troth in a voice to be heard to the end of the Church and turns on his heel.*

CAPT. M.—(*Desperately.*) Rein back! Back to your troop! 'Tisn't half legal yet.

PADRE.— . . . joined together let no man put asunder.

CAPT. G. *paralyzed with fear, jibs after Blessing.*

CAPT. M.—(*Quickly.*) On your own front—one length. Take her with you. I don't come. You've nothing to say. (CAPT. G. *jingles up to altar.*)

CAPT. M.—(*In a piercing rattle meant to be*

a whisper.) Kneel, you stiff-necked ruffian!
Kneel!

PADRE.— . . . whose daughters ye are, so long as ye do well and are not afraid with any amazement.

CAPT. M.—Dismiss! Break off! Left wheel!

All troop to vestry. They sign.

CAPT. M.—Kiss Her, Gaddy.

CAPT. G.—(*Rubbing the ink into his glove.*)
Eh! Wha—at?

CAPT. M.—(*Taking one pace to Bride.*)
If you don't, I shall.

CAPT. G.—(*Interposing an arm.*) Not this journey!

General kissing, in which CAPT. G. is pursued by unknown female.

CAPT. G.—(*Faintly to M.*) This is Hades!
Can I wipe my face now?

CAPT. M.—My responsibility has ended.
Better ask *Missis Gadsby*.

CAPT. G. *winces as if shot and procession is Mendelssohned out of Church to paternal roof, where usual tortures take place over the wedding-cake.*

CAPT. M.—(*At table.*) Up with you, Gaddy. They expect a speech.

CAPT. G.—(*After three minutes' agony.*)
Ha—hmmm. (*Thunders of applause.*)

CAPT. M.—Doooid good, for a first attempt.
Now go and change your kit while Mama is weeping over—“the Missus.” (CAPT. G.

64 The Story of the Gadsbys

disappears. CAPT. M. *starts up tearing his hair.*) It's not *half* legal. Where are the shoes? Get an *ayah*.

AYAH.—Missie Captain Sahib done gone *band karo* all the *jutis*.

CAPT. M.—(*Brandishing scabbarded sword.*) Woman, produce those shoes! Some one lend me a bread-knife. We mustn't crack Gaddy's head more than it is. (*Slices heel off white satin slipper and puts slipper up his sleeve.*) Where is the Bride? (*To the company at large.* Be tender with that rice. It's a heathen custom. Give me the big bag.

Bride slips out quietly into 'rickshaw and departs towards the sunset.

CAPT. M.—(*In the open.*) Stole away, by Jove! So much the worse for Gaddy! Here he is. Now, Gaddy, this'll be livelier than Amdheran! Where's your horse?

CAPT. G.—(*Furiously, seeing that the women are out of earshot.*) Where the —— is my *Wife*?

CAPT. M.—Half-way to Mahasu by this time. You'll have to ride like Young Loch-invar.

Horse comes round on his hind legs ; refuses to let G. handle him.

CAPT. G.—Oh, you will, will you? Get round, you brute—you hog—you beast! Get round!

Wrenches horse's head over, nearly breaking

lower jaw ; swings himself into saddle, and sends home both spurs in the midst of a spattering gale of Best Patna.

CAPT. M. — For your life and your love — ride, Gaddy ! — And God bless you !

Throws half a pound of rice at G., who disappears, bowed forward on the saddle, in a cloud of sunlit dust.

CAPT. M. — I've lost old Gaddy. (*Lights cigarette and strolls off, singing absently*) :—

“ You may carve it on his tombstone, you may cut it on his card,

That a young man married is a young man marred ! ”

MISS DEERCOURT. — (*From her horse.*) Really, Captain Mafflin ! You are more plain-spoken than polite !

CAPT. M. — (*Aside.*) They say marriage is like cholera. Wonder who'll be the next victim.

White satin slipper slides from his sleeve and falls at his feet. Left wondering,

CURTAIN.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

“AND ye shall be as—Gods!”

SCENE. — *Thymy grass-plot at back of the Mahasu dâk-bungalow, overlooking little wooded valley. On the left, glimpse of the Dead Forest of Fagoo; on the right, Simla Hills. In background, line of the Snows.*

CAPT. GADSBY, now one week a husband, is smoking the pipe of peace on a rug in the sunshine. Banjo and tobacco-pouch on rug. Overhead, the Fagoo eagles. MRS. G. comes out of bungalow.

MRS. G. — My husband!

CAPT. G. — (*Lazily, with intense enjoyment.*)

Eh, wha-at? Say that again.

MRS. G. — I've written to Mama and told her that we shall be back on the 17th.

CAPT. G.—Did you give her my love?

MRS. G.—No, I kept all that for myself. (*Sitting down by his side.*) I thought you wouldn't mind.

CAPT. G.—(*With mock sternness.*) I object awf'ly. How did you know that it was yours to keep?

MRS. G.—I guessed, Phil.

CAPT. G.—(*Rapturously.*) *Little* Feather-weight!

MRS. G.—I *won't* be called those sporting pet names, bad boy.

CAPT. G.—You'll be called anything I choose. Has it ever occurred to you, Madam, that you are my Wife?

MRS. G.—It has. I haven't ceased wondering at it yet.

CAPT. G.—Nor I. It seems so strange; and yet, somehow, it doesn't. (*Confidently.*) You see, it could have been no one else.

MRS. G.—(*Softly.*) No. No one else—for me or for you. It must have been *all* arranged from the beginning. Phil, tell me again what made you care for me.

CAPT. G.—How could I help it? You were *you*, you know.

MRS. G.—Did you ever want to help it? Speak the truth!

CAPT. G.—(*A twinkle in his eye.*) I did, darling, just at the first. But only at the very first. (*Chuckles.*) I called you—stoop low and I'll whisper—"a little beast." Ho! ho! ho!

MRS. G.—(*Taking him by the mustache and making him sit up.*) "A—little—beast!" Stop laughing over your crime! And yet you had the—the—awful cheek to propose to me!

CAPT. G.—I'd changed my mind then. And you weren't a little beast any more.

68 The Story of the Gadsbys

MRS. G.—Thank you, Sir! And when was I ever?

CAPT. G.—*Never!* But that first day, when you gave me tea in that peach-colored muslin gown thing, you looked—you did indeed, dear—such an absurd little mite. And I didn't know what to say to you.

MRS. G.—(*Twisting mustache.*) So you said “Little beast.” Upon my word, Sir! *I* called you a “Crrrreature,” but I wish now I had called you something worse.

CAPT. G.—(*Very meekly.*) I apologize, but you're hurting me awf'ly. (*Interlude.*) You're welcome to torture me again on those terms.

MRS. G.—Oh, *why* did you let me do it?

CAPT. G.—(*Looking across valley.*) No reason in particular, but—if it amused you or did you any good—you might—wipe those dear little boots of yours on me.

MRS. G. — (*Stretching out her hands.*) Don't! Oh, don't! Philip, my King, *please* don't talk like that. It's how *I* feel. You're so much too good for me. So much too good!

CAPT. G.—Me! I'm not fit to put my arm round you. (*Puts it round.*)

MRS. G.—Yes, you are. But I—what have I ever done?

CAPT. G.—Given me a wee bit of your heart, haven't you, my Queen?

MRS. G.—*That's* nothing. Any one would do *that*. They cou—couldn't help it.

CAPT. G.—Pussy, you'll make me horribly conceited. Just when I was beginning to feel so humble, too.

MRS. G.—Humble! I don't believe it's in your character.

CAPT. G.—What do you know of my character, Impertinence?

MRS. G.—Ah, but I shall, sha'n't I, Phil? I shall have time in all the years and years to come, to know everything about you; and there will be no secrets between us.

CAPT. G.—Little witch! I believe you know me thoroughly already.

MRS. G.—I think I can guess. You're selfish?

CAPT. G.—Yes.

MRS. G.—Foolish?

CAPT. G.—*Very.*

MRS. G.—And a dear?

CAPT. G.—That is as my lady pleases.

MRS. G.—Then your lady *is* pleased. (*A pause.*) D'you know that we're two solemn, serious, grown-up people—

CAPT. G.—(*Tilting her straw hat over her eyes.*) You grown up! Pooh! You're a baby.

MRS. G.—And we're talking nonsense.

CAPT. G.—Then let's go on talking nonsense. I rather like it. Pussy, I'll tell you a secret. Promise not to repeat?

MRS. G.—'Ye—es. Only to you.

CAPT. G.—I love you.

70 The Story of the Gadsbys

MRS. G.—Re-ally! For how long?

CAPT. G.—For ever and ever.

MRS. G.—That's a long time.

CAPT. G.—Think so? It's the shortest *I* can do with.

MRS. G.—You're getting quite clever.

CAPT. G.—I'm talking to *you*.

MRS. G.—Prettily turned. Hold up your stupid old head and I'll pay you for it!

CAPT. G.—(*Affecting supreme contempt.*) Take it yourself if you want it.

MRS. G.—I've a great mind to . . . and I will! (*Takes it, and is repaid with interest.*)

CAPT. G.—Little Featherweight, it's my opinion that we *are* a couple of idiots.)

MRS. G.—We're the only two sensible people in the world! Ask the eagle. He's coming by.

CAPT. G.—Ah! I dare say he's seen a good many "sensible people" at Mahasu. They say that those birds live for ever so long.

MRS. G.—How long?

CAPT. G.—A hundred and twenty years.

MRS. G.—A hundred and twenty years! O-oh! And in a hundred and twenty years where will these two sensible people be?

CAPT. G.—What *does* it matter so long as we are together now?

MRS. G.—(*Looking round the horizon.*) Yes. Only you and I—I and you—in the whole wide, wide world until the end. (*Sees*

the line of the Snows.) How big and quiet the hills look! D'you think they care for us?

CAPT. G.—'Can't say I've consulted 'em particularly. *I* care, and that's enough for me.

MRS. G.—(*Drawing nearer to him.*) Yes, now . . . but afterwards. What's that little black blur on the Snows?

CAPT. G.—A snowstorm, forty miles away. You'll see it move, as the wind carries it across the face of that spur, and then it will be all gone.

MRS. G.—And then it will be all gone. (*Shivers.*)

CAPT. G.—(*Anxiously.*) 'Not chilled, pet, are you? 'Better let me get your cloak.

MRS. G.—No. Don't leave me, Phil. Stay here. I believe I am afraid. Oh, why are the hills so *horrid!* Phil, promise me, promise me that you'll always, *always* love me.

CAPT. G.—What's the trouble, darling? I can't promise any more than I have; but I'll promise that again and again if you like.

MRS. G.—(*Her head on his shoulder.*) Say it, then—say it! N-no—don't! The—the—eagles would laugh. (*Recovering.*) My husband, you've married a little goose.

CAPT. G.—(*Very tenderly.*) Have I? I am content whatever she is, so long as she is mine.

72 The Story of the Gadsbys

MRS. G.—(*Quickly.*) Because she is yours or because she is me mineself?

CAPT. G.—Because she is both. (*Pitiously.*) I'm not clever, dear, and I don't think I can make myself understood properly.

MRS. G.—*I* understand. Pip, will you tell me something?

CAPT. G.—Anything you like. (*Aside.*) I wonder what's coming now.

MRS. G.—(*Haltingly, her eyes lowered.*) You told me once in the old days—centuries and centuries ago—that you had been engaged before. I didn't say anything—*then.*

CAPT. G.—(*Innocently.*) Why not?

MRS. G.—(*Raising her eyes to his.*) Because—because I was afraid of losing you, my heart. But now—tell about it—*please.*

CAPT. G.—There's nothing to tell. I was awf'ly old then—nearly two and twenty—and she was *quite* that.

MRS. G.—That means she was older than you. I shouldn't like her to have been younger. Well?

CAPT. G.—Well, I fancied myself in love and raved about a bit, and—oh, yes, by Jove! I made up poetry. Ha! Ha!

MRS. G.—You never wrote any for *me!* What happened?

CAPT. G.—I came out here, and the whole thing went *phut.* She wrote to say that there had been a mistake, and then she married.

MRS. G.—Did she care for you much?

CAPT. G.—No. At least she didn't show it as far as I remember.

MRS. G.—As far as you remember! Do you remember her name? (*Hears it and bows her head.*) Thank you, my husband.

CAPT. G.—Who but you had the right? Now, Little Featherweight, have you ever been mixed up in any dark and dismal tragedy?

MRS. G.—If you call me Mrs. Gadsby, p'raps I'll tell.

CAPT. G.—(*Throwing Parade rasp into his voice.*) Mrs. Gadsby, confess!

MRS. G.—Good Heavens, Phil! I never knew that you could speak in that terrible voice.

CAPT. G.—You don't know half my accomplishments yet. Wait till we are settled in the Plains, and I'll show you how I bark at my troop. You were going to say, darling?

MRS. G.—I—I don't like to, after that voice. (*Tremulously.*) Phil, never you *dare* to speak to me in that tone, whatever I may do!

CAPT. G.—My poor little love! Why, you're shaking all over. I *am* so sorry. Of course I never meant to upset you. Don't tell me anything. I'm a brute.

MRS. G.—No, you aren't, and I *will* tell. . . . There was a man.

CAPT. G.—(*Lightly.*) Was there? Lucky man!

MRS. G.—(*In a whisper.*) And I thought I cared for him.

74 The Story of the Gadsbys

CAPT. G.—Still luckier man! Well?

MRS. G.—And I thought I cared for him—and I didn't—and then you came—and I cared for you very, *very* much indeed. That's all. (*Face hidden.*) You aren't angry, are you?

CAPT. G.—Angry? Not in the least. (*Aside.*) Good Lord, what have I done to deserve this angel?

MRS. G.—(*Aside.*) And he never asked for the name! How funny men are! But perhaps it's as well.

CAPT. G.—That man will go to heaven because you once thought you cared for him. 'Wonder if you'll ever drag me up there?

MRS. G.—(*Firmly.*) 'Sha'n't go if you don't.

CAPT. G.—Thanks. I say, Pussy, I don't know much about your religious beliefs. You were brought up to believe in a heaven and all that, weren't you?

MRS. G.—Yes. But it was a pincushion heaven, with hymn-books in all the pews.

CAPT. G.—(*Wagging his head with intense conviction.*) Never mind. There is a *pukka* heaven.

MRS. G.—Where do you bring that message from, my prophet?

CAPT. G.—Here! Because we care for each other. So it's all right.

MRS. G.—(*As a troop of langurs crash through the branches.*) So it's all right. But Darwin says that we came from *those*!

CAPT. G.—(*Placidly.*) Ah! Darwin was never in love with an angel. That settles it. Sstt, you brutes! Monkeys, indeed! You shouldn't read those books.

MRS. G.—(*Folding her hands.*) If it pleases my Lord the King to issue proclamation.

CAPT. G.—Don't, dear one. There are no orders between us. Only I'd *rather* you didn't. They lead to nothing, and bother people's heads.

MRS. G.—Like your first engagement.

CAPT. G.—(*With an immense calm.*) That was a necessary evil and led to you. Are *you* nothing?

MRS. G.—Not so very much, am I?

CAPT. G.—All this world and the next to me.

MRS. G.—(*Very softly.*) My boy of boys! Shall I tell *you* something?

CAPT. G.—Yes, if it's not dreadful—about other men.

MRS. G.—It's about my own bad little self.

CAPT. G.—Then it must be good. Go on, dear.

MRS. G.—(*Slowly.*) I don't know why I'm telling you, Pip; but if ever you marry again—(*Interlude.*) Take your hand from my mouth or I'll *bite*!—In the future, then remember . . . I don't know quite how to put it!

CAPT. G.—(*Snorting indignantly.*) Don't try. "Marry again," indeed!

76 The Story of the Gadsbys

MRS. G.—I must. Listen, my husband. Never, never, *never* tell your wife anything that you do not wish her to remember and think over all her life. Because a woman—yes, I am a woman, Sir,—*can't* forget.

CAPT. G.—By Jove, how do *you* know that?

MRS. G.—(*Confusedly.*) I don't. I'm only guessing. I am—I was—a silly little girl; but I feel that I know so much, oh, so very much more than you, dearest. To begin with, I'm your wife.

CAPT. G.—So I have been led to believe.

MRS. G.—And I shall want to know every one of your secrets—to share everything you know with you. (*Stares round desperately for lucidity and coherence.*)

CAPT. G.—So you shall, dear, so you shall—but don't look like that.

MRS. G.—For your own sake don't stop me, Phil. I shall never talk to you in this way again. You must *not* tell me! At least, not now. Later on, when I'm an old matron it won't matter, but if you love me, be very good to me now; for this part of my life I shall *never* forget! Have I made you understand?

CAPT. G.—I think so, child. Have I said anything yet that you disapprove of?

MRS. G.—Will you be *very* angry? That—that voice, and what you said about the engagement—

CAPT. G.—But you *asked* to be told that, darling.

MRS. G.—And *that's* why you shouldn't have told me! You must be the judge, and, oh, Pip, dearly as I love you, I shan't be able to help you! I shall hinder you, and you must judge in spite of me!

CAPT. G.—(*Meditatively.*) We have a great many things to find out together, God help us both—say so, Pussy—but we shall understand each other better every day; and I think I'm beginning to see now. How in the world did you come to know just the importance of giving me just that lead?

MRS. G.—I've told you that I *don't* know. Only somehow it seemed that, in all this new life, I was being guided for your sake as well as my own.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) Then Maffin was right! They know, and we—we're blind—all of us. (*Lightly.*) 'Getting a little beyond our depth, dear, aren't we? I'll remember, and, if I fail, let me be punished as I deserve.

MRS. G.—There shall be no punishment. We'll start into life together from here—you and I—and no one else.

CAPT. G.—And no one else. (*A pause.*) Your eyelashes are all wet, Sweet? Was there ever such a quaint little Absurdity?

MRS. G.—Was there ever such nonsense 'alked before?

CAPT. G.—(*Knocking the ashes out of his*

pipe.) 'Tisn't what we say, it's what we don't say, that helps. And it's all the profoundest philosophy. But no one would understand—even if it were put into a book.

MRS. G.—The idea! No—only we ourselves, or people like ourselves—if there are any people like us.

CAPT. G.—(*Magisterially.*) All people, not like ourselves, are blind idiots.

MRS. G.—(*Wiping her eyes.*) Do you think, then, that there are any people as happy as we are?

CAPT. G.—'Must be—unless we've appropriated all the happiness in the world.

MRS. G.—(*Looking towards Simla.*) Poor dears! Just fancy if we have!

CAPT. G.—Then we'll hang on to the whole show, for it's a great deal too jolly to lose—eh, wife o' mine?

MRS. G.—Oh, Pip, Pip! How much of you is a solemn, married man and how much a horrid, slangy schoolboy?

CAPT. G.—When you tell me how much of you was eighteen last birthday and how much is as old as the Sphinx and twice as mysterious, perhaps I'll attend to you. Lend me that banjo. The spirit moveth me to yowl at the sunset.

MRS. G.—Mind! It's not tuned. Ah! how that jars!

CAPT. G.—(*Turning pegs.*) It's amazingly difficult to keep a banjo to proper pitch.

MRS. G.—It's the same with all musical instruments. What shall it be?

CAPT. G.—“Vanity,” and let the hills hear. (*Sings through the first and half of the second verse. Turning to MRS. G.*) Now, chorus! Sing, Pussy!

BOTH TOGETHER—(*Con brio, to the horror of the monkeys who are settling for the night.*)

“Vanity, all is Vanity,” said Wisdom, scorning me—
I clasped my true love's tender hand and answered
frank and free—ee:—

“If this be Vanity who'd be wise?
If this be Vanity who'd be wise?
If this be Vanity who'd be wi—ise?
(*Crescendo.*)—Vanity let it be!”

MRS. G.—(*Defiantly to the gray of the evening sky.*) “Vanity let it be!”

ECHO.—(*From the Fagoo spur.*) Let it be!

CURTAIN.

FATIMA.

“AND you may go into every room of the house and see everything that is there, but into the Blue Room you must *not* go.”—*The Story of Blue Beard.*

SCENE.—*The GADSBYS' bungalow in the Plains.*

Time, 11 A. M., on a Sunday morning. CAPTAIN GADSBY, in his shirt-sleeves, is bending over a complete set of Hussar's equipment, from saddle to picketing-rope, which is neatly spread over the floor of his study. He is smoking an unclean briar, and his forehead is puckered with thought.

CAPT. G.—(*To himself, fingering a head-stall.*) Jack's an ass! There's enough brass on this to load a mule . . . and, if the Americans know anything about anything, it can be cut down to a bit only. 'Don't want the watering-bridle, either. Humbug! . . . Half a dozen sets of chains and pulleys for the same old horse! (*Scratching his head.*) Now, let's consider it all over from the beginning. By Jove, I've forgotten the scale of weights! Ne'er mind. 'Keep the bit only, and eliminate every boss from the crupper to the breast-

plate. No breastplate at all. Simple leather strap across the breast—like the Russians. Hi! Jack never thought of *that*!

MRS. G.—(*Entering hastily, her hand bound in a cloth.*) Oh, Pip! I've scalded my hand over that horrid, horrid Tiparee jam.

CAPT. G.—(*Absently.*) Eh! Wha-at?

MRS. G.—(*With round-eyed reproach.*) I've scalded it *aw*-fully! Aren't you sorry? And I *did* so want that jam to jam properly.

CAPT. G.—Poor little woman! Let me kiss the place and make it well. (*Unrolling bandage.*) Small sinner! Where's that scald? I can't see it.

MRS. G.—On the top of the little finger. There!—It's a most 'normous big burn!

CAPT. G.—(*Kissing little finger.*) Baby! Let Hyder look after the jam. You know I don't care for sweets.

MRS. G.—In-deed? . . . Pip!

CAPT. G.—Not of that kind, anyhow. And now run along, Minnie, and leave me to my own base devices. I'm busy.

MRS. G.—(*Calmly settling herself in long chair.*) So I see. What a mess you're making! Why have you brought all that smelly leather stuff into the house?

CAPT. G.—To play with. Do you mind, dear?

MRS. G.—Let *me* play, too. I'd like it.

CAPT. G.—I'm afraid you wouldn't, Pussy. . . . Don't you think that jam will burn, or

whatever it is that jam does when it's not looked after by a clever little housekeeper?

MRS. G.—I thought you said Hyder could attend to it. I left him in the veranda, stirring—when I hurt myself so.

CAPT. G.—(*His eye returning to the equipment.*) Po-oor little woman! . . . Three pound four and seven is three eleven, and that can be cut down to two eight, with just a *lee-tle* care, without weakening anything. Farriery is all rot in incompetent hands. What's the use of a shoe-case when a man's scouting? He can't stick it on with a lick—like a stamp—the shoe! Skittles!

MRS. G.—What's skittles? Pah! What *is* this leather cleaned with?

CAPT. G.—Cream and champagne and . . . Look here, dear, do you really want to talk to me about anything important?

MRS. G.—No. I've done my accounts, and I thought I'd like to see what you're doing.

CAPT. G.—Well, love, now you've seen and . . . Would you mind? . . . That is to say. . . Minnie, I really *am* busy.

MRS. G.—You want me to go?

CAPT. G.—Yes, dear, for a little while. This tobacco will hang in your dress, and saddlery doesn't interest you.

MRS. G.—Everything you do interests me, Pip.

CAPT. G.—Yes, I know, I know, dear. I'll tell you all about it some day when

I've put a head on this thing. In the meantime . . .

MRS. G.—I'm to be turned out of the room like a troublesome child?

CAPT. G.—No-o. I don't mean that exactly. But, you see, I shall be tramping up and down, shifting these things to and fro, and I shall be in your way. Don't you think so?

MRS. G.—Can't I lift them about? Let me try. (*Reaches forward to trooper's saddle.*)

CAPT. G. — Good gracious, child, don't touch it. You'll hurt yourself. (*Picking up saddle.*) Little girls aren't expected to handle *numdahs*. Now, where would you like it put? (*Holds saddle above his head.*)

MRS. G.—(*A break in her voice.*) Nowhere. Pip, how good you are—and how strong! Oh, what's that ugly red streak inside your arm?

Capt. G. — (*Lowering saddle quickly.*) Nothing. It's a mark of sorts. (*Aside.*) And Jack's coming to tiffin with *his* notions all cut and dried!

MRS. G.—I know it's a mark, but I've never seen it before. It runs all up the arm. What is it?

CAPT. G.—A cut—if you want to know.

MRS. G.—Want to know! Of course I do! I can't have my husband cut to pieces in this way. How did it come? Was it an accident! Tell me, Pip.

CAPT. G.—(*Grimly.*) No. 'Twasn't an

accident. I got it—from a man—in Afghanistan.

MRS. G.—In action? Oh, Pip, and you *never* told me!

CAPT. G.—I'd forgotten all about it.

MRS. G.—Hold up your arm! What a horrid, ugly scar! Are you sure it doesn't hurt now? How did the man give it you?

CAPT. G. — (*Desperately looking at his watch.*) With a knife. I came down—Old Van Loo did, that's to say—and fell on my leg, so I couldn't run. And then this man came up and began chopping at me as I sprawled.

MRS. G.—Oh, don't, don't! That's enough! . . . Well, what happened?

CAPT. G.—I couldn't get to my holster, and Mafflian came round the corner and stopped the performance.

MRS. G.—He's such a lazy man, I don't believe he did.

CAPT. G.—Don't you? I don't think the man had much doubt about it. Jack cut his head off.

MRS. G.—Cut—his—head—off! “With one below” as they say in the books?

CAPT. G.—I'm not sure. I was too interested in myself to know much about it. Anyhow, the head was off, and Jack was punching old Van Loo in the ribs to make him get up. Now you know all about it, dear and now . . .

MRS. G.—You want me to go, of course. You never told me about this, though I've been married to you for *ever* so long; and you never *would* have told me if I hadn't found out; and you never *do* tell me anything about yourself, or what you do, or what you take an interest in.

CAPT. G.—Darling, I'm always with you, aren't I?

MRS. G.—Always in my pocket, you were going to say. I know you are; but you are always *thinking* away from me.

CAPT. G.—(*Trying to hide a smile.*) Am I? I wasn't aware of it. I'm awf'ly sorry.

MRS. G.—(*Piteously.*) Oh, don't make fun of me! Pip, you know what I mean. When you are reading one of those things about Cavalry, by that idiotic Prince—why doesn't he *be* a Prince instead of a stable-boy?

CAPT. G.—Prince Kraft a stable-boy! Oh, my Aunt! Never mind, dear! You were going to say?

MRS. G.—It doesn't matter. You don't care for what I say. Only—only you get up and walk about the room, staring in front of you, and then Mafflin comes in to dinner, and after I'm in the drawing-room I can hear you and him talking, and talking, and talking, about things I can't understand, and—oh, I get *so* tired and feel *so* lonely!—I don't want to complain and be a trouble, Pip; but I do—indeed I do!

86 The Story of the Gadsbys

CAPT. G.—My poor darling! I never thought of that. Why don't you ask some nice people in to dinner?

MRS. G.—Nice people! Where am I to find them? Horrid frumps! And if I *did*, I shouldn't be amused. You know I only want *you*.

CAPT. G.—And you have me surely, Sweetheart?

MRS. G.—I have not! Pip, why don't you take me into your life?"

CAPT. G.—More than I do? That would be difficult, dear.

MRS. G.—Yes, I suppose it would—to you. I'm no help to you—no companion to you; and you like to have it so.

CAPT. G.—Aren't you a little unreasonable, Pussy?

MRS. G.—(*Stamping her foot.*) I'm the most reasonable woman in the world—when I'm treated properly.

CAPT. G.—And since when have I been treating you improperly?

MRS. G.—Always—and since the beginning. You *know* you have.

CAPT. G.—I don't. But I'm willing to be convinced.

MRS. G.—(*Pointing to saddlery.*) There!

CAPT. G.—How do you mean?

MRS. G.—What does all *that* mean? Why am I not to be told? Is it so precious?

CAPT. G.—I forget its exact Government

value just at present. It means that it is a great deal too heavy.

MRS. G.—Then why do you touch it?

CAPT. G.—To make it lighter. See here, little love, I've one notion and Jack has another, but we are both agreed that all this equipment is about thirty pounds too heavy. The thing is how to cut it down without weakening any part of it, and, at the same time, allowing the trooper to carry everything he wants for his own comfort—socks and shirts and things of that kind.

MRS. G.—Why doesn't he pack them in a little trunk?

CAPT. G.—(*Kissing her.*) Oh, you darling! Pack them in a little trunk, indeed! Hussars don't carry trunks, and it's a most important thing to make the horse do all the carrying.

MRS. G.—But why need *you* bother about it? You're not a trooper.

CAPT. G.—No; but I command a few score of him; and equipment is nearly everything in these days.

MRS. G.—More than *me*?

CAPT. G.—Stupid! Of course not; but it's a matter that I'm tremendously interested in, because if I or Jack, or I and Jack, hack out some sort of lighter saddlery and all that, it's possible that we may get it adopted.

MRS. G.—How?

CAPT. G.—Sanctioned at Home, where they will make a sealed pattern—a pattern that all

88 The Story of the Gadsbys

the saddlers must copy—and so it will be used by all the regiments.

MRS. G.—And that interests you?

CAPT. G.—It's part of my profession, y' know, and my profession is a good deal to me. Everything in a soldier's equipment is important, and if we can improve that equipment, so much the better for the soldiers and for us.

MRS. G.—Who's "us"?

CAPT. G.—Jack and I, though Jack's notions are too radical. What's that big sigh for, Minnie?

MRS. G.—Oh, nothing . . . and you've kept all this a secret from me! Why?

CAPT. G.—Not a secret, exactly, dear. I didn't say anything about it to you because I didn't think it would amuse you.

MRS. G.—And am I only made to be amused?

CAPT. G.—No, of course. I merely mean that it couldn't interest you.

MRS. G.—It's *your* work and—and if you'd let me, I'd count all these things up. If they are too heavy, you know by how much they are too heavy, and you must have a list of things made out to your scale of lightness, and—

CAPT. G.—I have got both scales somewhere in my head; but it's hard to tell how light you can make a headstall, for instance, until you've actually had a model made.

MRS. G.—But if you read out the list, I could copy it down, and pin it up there just above your table. Wouldn't that do?

CAPT. G.—It would be awf'ly nice, dear, but it would be giving you trouble for nothing. I can't work that way. I go by rule of thumb. I know the present scale of weights, and the other one—the one that I'm trying to work to—will shift and vary so much that I couldn't be certain, even if I wrote it down.

MRS. G.—I'm *so* sorry. I thought I might help. Is there anything else that I could be of use in?

CAPT. G.—(*Looking round the room.*) I can't think of anything. You're *always* helping me, you know.

MRS. G.—Am I? How?

CAPT. G.—You are you of course, and as long as you're near me—I can't explain exactly, but it's in the air.

MRS. G.—And that's why you wanted to send me away?

CAPT. G.—That's only when I'm trying to do work—grubby work like this.

MRS. G.—Maffin's better, then, isn't he?

CAPT. G.—(*Rashly.*) Of course he is. Jack and I have been thinking down the same groove for two or three years about this equipment. It's our hobby, and it may really be useful some day.

MRS. G.—(*After a pause.*) And that's all that you have away from me?

CAPT. G.—It isn't very far away from you now. Take care that the oil on that bit doesn't come off on your dress.

MRS. G.—I wish—I wish so much that I could really help you. I believe I could . . . if I left the room. But that's not what I mean.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) Give me patience! I wish she would go. (*Aloud.*) I assure you you can't do anything for me, Minnie, and I must really settle down to this. Where's my pouch?

MRS. G.—(*Crossing to writing-table.*) Here you are, Bear. What a mess you keep your table in!

CAPT. G.—Don't touch it. There's a method in my madness, though you mightn't think it.

MRS. G.—(*At table.*) I want to look. . . . Do you keep accounts, Pip?

CAPT. G.—(*Bending over saddlery.*) Of a sort. Are you rummaging among the Troop papers? Be careful.

MRS. G.—Why? I sha'n't disturb anything. Good gracious! I had no idea that you had anything to do with so many sick horses.

CAPT. G.—'Wish I hadn't, but they insist on falling sick. Minnie, if I were you I really should not investigate those papers. You may come across something that you won't like.

MRS. G.—Why will you always treat me like a child? I know I'm not displacing the horrid things.

CAPT. G.—(*Resignedly.*) Very well, then, Don't blame me if anything happens. Play with the table and let me go on with the saddlery. (*Slipping hand into trousers-pocket.*) Oh, the deuce!

MRS. G.—(*Her back to G.*) What's that for?

CAPT. G.—Nothing. (*Aside.*) There's not much of importance in it, but I wish I'd torn it up.

MRS. G.—(*Turning over contents of table.*) I know you'll hate me for this; but I do want to see what your work is like. (*A pause.*) Pip, what are "farcy-buds"?

CAPT. G.—Hah! Would you really like to know? They aren't pretty things.

MRS. G.—This Journal of Veterinary Science says they are of "absorbing interest." Tell me.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) It may turn her attention.

Gives a long and designedly loathsome account of glanders and farcy.

MRS. G.—Oh, that's enough. Don't go on!

CAPT. G.—But you wanted to know. . . . Then these things suppurate and matterate and spread—

MRS. G.—Pip, you're making me sick! You're a horrid, disgusting schoolboy.

CAPT. G.—(*On his knees among the bridles.*)

92 The Story of the Gadsbys

You asked to be told. It's not my fault if you worry me into talking about horrors.

MRS. G.—Why didn't you say—No?

CAPT. G.—Good Heavens, child? Have you come in here simply to bully me?

MRS. G.—I bully *you*? How could I! You're so strong. (*Hysterically.*) Strong enough to pick me up and put me outside the door, and leave me there to cry. Aren't you?

CAPT. G.—It seems to me that you're an irrational little baby. Are you quite well?

MRS. G.—Do I look ill? (*Returning to table.*) Who is your lady friend with the big gray envelope and the fat monogram outside?

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) Then it wasn't in the drawers, confound it. (*Aloud.*) "God made her, therefore let her pass for a woman." You remember what farcy-buds are like?

MRS. G.—(*Showing envelope.*) This has nothing to do with *them*. I'm going to open it. May I?

CAPT. G.—Certainly, if you want to. I'd sooner you didn't, though. I don't ask to look at your letters to the Deercourt girl.

MRS. G.—You'd *better* not, Sir! (*Takes letter from envelope.*) Now, may I look? If you say no, I shall cry.

CAPT. G.—You've never cried in my knowledge of you, and I don't believe you could.

MRS. G.—I feel very like it to-day, Pip.

Don't be hard on me. (*Reads letter.*) It begins in the middle, without any "Dear Captain Gadsby," or anything. How funny!

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) No, it's not Dear Captain Gadsby, or anything, now. How funny!

MRS. G.—What a strange letter! (*Reads.*) "And so the moth has come too near the candle at last, and has been singed into—shall I say Respectability? I congratulate him, and hope he will be as happy as he deserves to be." What does that mean? Is she congratulating you about our marriage?

CAPT. G.—Yes, I suppose so.

MRS. G.—(*Still reading letter.*) She seems to be a particular friend of yours.

CAPT. G.—Yes. She was excellent matron of sorts—a Mrs. Herriott—wife of a Colonel Herriott. I used to know some of her people at Home long ago—before I came out.

MRS. G.—Some Colonels' wives are young—as young as me. I knew one who was younger.

CAPT. G.—Then it couldn't have been Mrs. Herriott. She was old enough to have been your mother, dear.

MRS. G.—I remember now. Mrs. Scargill was talking about her at the Duffins' tennis, before you came for me, on Tuesday. Captain Maffin said she was a "dear old woman." Do you know, I think Maffin is a very clumsy man with his feet.

94 The Story of the Gadsbys

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) Good old Jack!
(*Aloud.*) Why, dear?

MRS. G.—He had put his cup down on the ground then, and he literally stepped into it. Some of the tea spirted over my dress—the gray one. I meant to tell you about it before.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) There are the makings of a strategist about Jack, though his methods are coarse. (*Aloud.*) You'd better get a new dress, then. (*Aside.*) Let us pray that that will turn her.

MRS. G.—Oh, it isn't stained in the least. I only thought that I'd tell you. (*Returning to letter.*) *What* an extraordinary person! (*Reads.*) “But need I remind you that you have taken upon yourself a charge of wardship”—what in the world is a charge of wardship?—“which, as you yourself know, may end in Consequences” . . .

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) It's safest to let 'em see everything as they come across it; but 'seems to me that there are exceptions to the rule. (*Aloud.*) I told you that there was nothing to be gained from rearranging my table.

MRS. G.—(*Absently.*) What *does* the woman mean? She goes on talking about Consequences—“almost inevitable Consequences” with a capital C—for half a page. (*Flushing scarlet.*) Oh, good gracious! How abominable!

CAPT. G.—(*Promptly.*) Do you think so? Doesn't it show a sort of motherly interest in us? (*Aside.*) Thank Heaven, Harry always wrapped her meaning up safely. (*Aloud.*) Is it absolutely necessary to go on with the letter, darling?

MRS. G.—It's impertinent—it's simply horrid. What *right* has this woman to write in this way to you? She oughtn't to.

CAPT. G.—When you write to the Deercourt girl, I notice that you generally fill three or four sheets. Can't you let an old woman babble on paper once in a way? She means well.

MRS. G.—I don't care. She shouldn't write, and if she did, you ought to have shown me her letter.

CAPT. G.—Can't you understand why I kept it to myself, or must I explain at length—as I explained the farcy-buds?

MRS. G.—(*Furiously.*) Pip, I *hate* you! This is as bad as those idiotic saddle-bags on the floor. Never mind whether it would please me or not, you ought to have given it to me to read.

CAPT. G.—It comes to the same thing. You took it yourself.

MRS. G.—Yes, but if I hadn't taken it, you wouldn't have said a word. I think this Harriet Herriott—it's like a name in a book—is an interfering old Thing.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) So long as you thor-

oughly understand that she *is* old, I don't much care what you think. (*Aloud.*) Very good, dear. Would you like to write and tell her so? She's seven thousand miles away.

MRS. G.—I don't want to have anything to do with her, but you ought to have told me. (*Turning to last page of letter.*) And she patronizes *me*, too. *I've* never seen her! (*Reads.*) "I do not know how the world stands with you. In all human probability I shall never know; but whatever I may have said before, I pray for *her* sake more than for yours that all may be well. I have learnt what misery means, and I dare not wish that any one dear to you should share my knowledge."

CAPT. G.—Good God! Can't you leave that letter alone, or, at least, can't you refrain from reading it aloud? I've been through it once. Put it back on the desk. Do you hear me?

MRS. G.—(*Irresolutely.*) I sh—sha'n't! (*Looks at G.'s eyes.*) Oh, Pip, *please!* I didn't mean to make you angry—'Deed, I didn't. Pip, I'm so sorry. I know I've wasted your time . . .

CAPT. G.—(*Grimly.*) You have. Now, will you be good enough to go . . . if there is nothing more in my room that you are anxious to pry into?

MRS. G.—(*Putting out her hands.*) Oh, Pip, don't look at me like that! I've never

seen you look like that before and it hu-urts me! I'm sorry. I oughtn't to have been here at all, and—and—and—(*sobbing.*) Oh, be good to me! Be good to me! There's only you—anywhere!

Breaks down in long chair, hiding face in cushions.

CAPT. G.—(*Aside.*) She doesn't know how she flicked me on the raw. (*Aloud, bending over chair.*) I didn't mean to be harsh, dear—I didn't really. You can stay here as long as you please, and do what you please. Don't cry like that. You'll make yourself sick. (*Aside.*) What on earth has come over her? (*Aloud.*) Darling, what's the matter with you?

MRS. G.—(*Her face still hidden.*) Let me go—let me go to my own room. Only—only say you aren't angry with me.

CAPT. G.—Angry with *you*, love! Of course not. I was angry with myself. I'd lost my temper over the saddlery. . . . Don't hide your face, Pussy. I want to kiss it.

Bends lower, MRS. G. slides right arm round his neck. Several interludes and much sobbing.

MRS. G.—(*In a whisper.*) I didn't mean about the jam when I came in to tell you—

CAPT. G.—Bother the jam and the equipment! (*Interlude.*)

MRS. G.—(*Still more faintly.*) My finger wasn't scalded at *all*. I—I wanted to speak to you about—about—something else, and—I didn't know how.

98 The Story of the Gadsbys

CAPT. G.—Speak away, then. (*Looking into her eyes.*) Eh! Wha—at? Minnie! Here, don't go away! You don't mean?

MRS. G.—(*Hysterically, backing to portière and hiding her face in its folds.*) The—the Almost Inevitable Consequences! (*Flits through portière as G. attempts to catch her, and bolts herself in her own room.*)

CAPT. G.—(*His arms full of portière.*) Oh! (*Sitting down heavily in chair.*) I'm a brute—a pig—a bully, and a blackguard. My poor, poor little darling! “Made to be amused only!” . . .

CURTAIN.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

“KNOWING Good and Evil.”

SCENE.—*The Gadsbys' bungalow in the Plains, in June. Pookah-coolies asleep in veranda where CAPT. GADSBY is walking up and down. DOCTOR'S trap in porch. JUNIOR CHAPLAIN fluctuating generally and uneasily through the house. Time, 3.40 A. M. Heat 94° in veranda.*

DOCTOR.—(*Coming into veranda and touching G. on the shoulder.*) You had better go in and see her now.

CAPT. G.—(*The color of good cigar-ash.*) Eh, wha-at? Oh, yes, of course. What did you say?

DOCTOR.—(*Syllable by syllable.*) Go—in—to—the—room—and—see—her. She wants to speak to you. (*Aside, testily.*) I shall have *him* on my hands next.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—(*In half-lighted dining-room.*) Isn't there any—?

DOCTOR.—(*Savagely.*) Hsh, you little fool!

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—Let me do my work. Gadsby, stop a minute! (*Edges after G.*)

DOCTOR.—Wait till she sends for you at

least—at least. Man alive, he'll kill you if you go in there! What are you bothering him for?

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—(*Coming into veranda.*) I've given him a stiff brandy-peg. He wants it. You've forgotten him for the last ten hours and—forgotten yourself too.

G. enters bedroom, which is lit by one night-light. Ayah on the floor pretending to be asleep.

VOICE.—(*From the bed.*) All down the street—such bonfires! Ayah, go and put them out! (*Appealingly.*) How can I sleep with an installation of the C. I. E. in my room? No—not C. I. E. Something else. What was it?

CAPT. G.—(*Trying to control his voice.*) Minnie, I'm here. (*Bending over bed.*) Don't you know me, Minnie? It's me—it's Phil—it's your husband.

VOICE.—(*Mechanically.*) It's me — it's Phil—it's your husband.

CAPT. G.—She doesn't know me! . . . It's your own husband, darling.

VOICE.—Your own husband, darling.

AYAH.—(*With an inspiration.*) *Memsahib* understanding all *I* saying.

CAPT. G.—Make her understand me then—quick!

AYAH.—(*Hand on MRS. G's forehead.*) *Memsahib!* Captain Sahib aya.

VOICE.—*Salam do.* (*Fretfully.*) I know I'm not fit to be seen.

AYAAN.—(*Aside to G.*) Say “*marneen*” same as at breakfast.

CAPT. G.—Good morning, little woman. How are we to-day?

VOICE.—That’s Phil. Poor old Phil. (*Viciously.*) Phil, you fool, I can’t see you. Come nearer.

CAPT. G.—Minnie! Minnie! It’s me—you know me?

VOICE.—(*Mockingly.*) Of course I do. Who does not know the man who was so cruel to his wife—almost the only one he ever had?

CAPT. G.—Yes, dear. Yes—of course, of course. But won’t you speak to him? He wants to speak to you *so* much.

VOICE.—They’d never let him in. The Doctor would give *darwaza band* even if he were in the house. He’ll never come. (*Despairingly.*) Oh, Judas! Judas! Judas!

CAPT. G.—(*Putting out his arms.*) They have let him in, and he always was in the house. Oh, my love—don’t you know me?

VOICE.—(*In a half chant.*) “And it came to pass at the eleventh hour that this poor soul repented.” It knocked at the gates, but they were shut—tight as a plaster—a great, burning plaster. They had pasted our marriage certificate all across the door, and it was made of red-hot iron—people really ought to be more careful, you know.

CAPT. G.—What *am* I to do? (*Takes her*

in his arms.) Minnie! speak to me—to Phil.

VOICE.—What shall I say? Oh, tell me what to say before it's too late! They are all going away and I can't say anything.

CAPT. G.—Say you know me! Only say you know me!

DOCTOR.—(*Who has entered quietly.*) For pity's sake don't take it too much to heart, Gadsby. It's this way sometimes. They won't recognize. They say all sorts of queer things—don't you *see*?

CAPT. G.—All right! All right! Go away now; she'll recognize me; you're bothering her. She *must*—mustn't she, Doc?

DOCTOR.—She will before . . . Have I your leave to try—

CAPT. G.—Anything you please, so long as she'll know me. It's only a question of—hours, isn't it?

DOCTOR.—(*Professionally.*) While there's life there's hope, y' know. But don't build on it.

CAPT. G.—I don't. Pull her together if it's possible. (*Aside.*) What have I done to deserve this?

DOCTOR.—(*Bending over bed.*) Now, Mrs. Gadsby! We shall be all right to-morrow. You *must* take it, or I sha'n't let Phil see you. It isn't nasty, is it?

VOICE.—Medicines! *Always* more medicines! Can't you leave me alone?

CAPT. G.—Oh, leave her in peace, Doc!

DOCTOR.—(*Stepping back,—aside.*) May I be forgiven if I've done wrong. (*Aloud.*) In a few minutes she ought to be sensible; but I daren't tell you to look for anything. It's only—

CAPT. G.—What? Go on, man.

DOCTOR.—(*In a whisper.*) Forcing the last rally.

CAPT. G.—Then leave us alone.

DOCTOR.—Don't mind what she says at first, if you can. They . . . they . . . they turn against those they love most sometimes in this . . . It's hard, but . . .

CAPT. G.—Am I her husband or are you? Leave us alone for whatever time we have together.

VOICE.—(*Confidentially.*) And we were engaged *quite* suddenly, Emma. I assure you that I never thought of it for a moment; but O my little Me!—I don't know *what* I should have done if he *hadn't* proposed.

CAPT. G.—She thinks of that Deercourt girl before she thinks of me. (*Aloud.*) Minnie!

VOICE.—Not from the shops, Mummy dear. You can get the real leaves from Kaintu, and (*laughing weakly*) never mind about the blossoms . . . Dead white silk is only fit for widows, and I *won't* wear it. It's as bad as a winding-sheet. (*A long pause.*)

CAPT. G.—I never asked a favor yet. If there is anybody to listen to me, let her know me—even if I die too!

VOICE.—) *Very faintly.*) Pip, Pip dear.

CAPT. G.—I'm here, darling.

VOICE.—What has happened? They've been bothering me so with medicines and things, and they wouldn't let you come and see me. I was never ill before. Am I ill now?

CAPT. G.—You—you aren't quite well.

VOICE.—How funny! Have I been ill long?

CAPT. G.—Some days; but you'll be all right in a little time.

VOICE.—Do you think so, Pip? I don't feel well and . . . Oh! what *have* they done to my hair?

CAPT. G.—I d-d-don't know.

VOICE.—They've cut it off. What a shame!

CAPT. G.—It must have been to make your head cooler.

VOICE.—'Just like a boy's wig. Don't I look horrid?

CAPT. G.—Never looked prettier in your life, dear. (*Aside.*) How am I to ask her to say good-by?

VOICE.—I don't *feel* pretty. I feel very ill. My heart won't work. It's nearly dead inside me, and there's a funny feeling in my eyes. Everything seems the same distance—you and the almirah and the table—inside my eyes or miles away. What does it mean, Pip?

CAPT. G.—You're a little feverish, Sweet-heart—very feverish. (*Breaking down.*) My love! my love! How can I let you go?

VOICE.—I thought so. Why didn't you tell me that at first?

CAPT. G.—What?

VOICE.—That I am going to . . . die.

CAPT. G.—But you aren't! You sha'n't.

AYAH.—(*Stepping into veranda after a glance at the bed.*) *Punkah chor do!*

VOICE.—It's hard, Pip. So very, *very* hard after one year—just one year. (*Wailing.*) And I'm only twenty. Most girls aren't even married at twenty. Can't they do *anything* to help me? I don't *want* to die.

CAPT. G.—Hush, dear. You won't.

VOICE.—What's the use of talking? *Help* me! You've never failed me yet. Oh, Phil, help me to keep alive. (*Feverishly.*) I don't believe you wish me to live. You weren't a bit sorry when that horrid Baby thing died. I wish I'd killed Baby!

CAPT. G.—(*Drawing his hand across his forehead.*) It's more than a man's meant to bear—it's not right. (*Aloud.*) Minnie, love, I'd die for you if it would help.

VOICE.—No more death. There's enough already. Pip, don't *you* die too.

CAPT. G.—I wish I dared.

VOICE.—It says:—"Till Death do us part." Nothing after that . . . and so it would be no use. It stops at the dying.

Why does it stop there? Only such a very short life, too. Pip, I'm sorry we married.

CAPT. G.—No! Anything but that, Min!

VOICE.—Because you'll forget and I'll forget. Oh, Pip, *don't* forget! I always loved you, though I was cross sometimes. If I ever did anything that you didn't like, say you forgive me now.

CAPT. G.—You never did, darling. On my soul and honor you never did. I haven't a thing to forgive you.

VOICE.—I sulked for a whole week about those petunias. (*With a laugh.*) What a little wretch I was, and how grieved you were! Forgive me that, Pip.

CAPT. G.—There's nothing to forgive. It was my fault. They *were* too near the drive. For God's sake don't talk so, Minnie! There's such a lot to say and so little time to say it in.

VOICE.—Say that you'll always love me—until the end.

CAPT. G.—Until the end. (*Carried away.*) It's a lie. It *must* be, because we've loved each other. This isn't the end.

VOICE.—(*Relapsing into semi-delirium.*) My Church-service has an ivory cross on the back, and *it* says so, so it must be true. "Till death do us part." . . . But that's a lie. (*With a parody of G.'s manner.*) A damned lie! (*Recklessly.*) Yes, I can swear as well as Trooper Pip. I can't make my head think, though. That's because they cut

off my hair. How *can* one think with one's head all fuzzy? (*Pleadingly.*) Hold me, Pip! Keep me with you always and always. (*Relapsing.*) But if you marry the Thorniss girl when I'm dead, I'll come back and howl under our bedroom window all night. Oh, bother! You'll think I'm a jackal. Pip, what time is it?

CAPT. G.—A little before the dawn, dear.

VOICE.—I wonder where I shall be this time to-morrow?

CAPT. G.—Would you like to see the Padre?

VOICE.—Why should I? He'd tell me that I'm going to heaven; and that wouldn't be true, because you are here.—Do you recollect when he upset the cream-ice all over his trousers at the Gassers' tennis?

CAPT. G.—Yes, dear.

VOICE.—I often wondered whether he got another pair of trousers; but then his are so shiny all over that you really couldn't tell unless you were told. Let's call him in and ask.

CAPT. G.—(*Gravely.*) No. I don't think he'd like that. 'Your head comfy, Sweet-heart?

VOICE.—(*Faintly with a sigh of contentment.*) Yeth! Gracious, Pip, when *did* you shave last? Your chin's worse than the barrel of a musical box. . . . No, don't lift it up. I like it. (*A pause.*) You said you've never cried at all. You're crying all over my cheek.

108 The Story of the Gadsbys

CAPT. G.—I—I—I can't help it, dear.

VOICE.—How funny! I couldn't cry now to save my life. (*G. shivers.*) I want to sing.

CAPT. G.—Won't it tire you? 'Better not, perhaps.

VOICE.—Why? I *won't* be ordered about! (*Begins in a hoarse quaver*):—

Minnie bakes oaken cake, Minnie brews ale,
All because her Johnnie's coming home from the sea.
(*That's parade, Pip.*)

And she grows red as a rose who was so pale:
And "Are you sure the church clock goes?" says she.

(*Pettishly.*) I knew I couldn't take the last note. How do the bass chords run? (*Puts out her hands and begins playing piano on the sheet.*)

CAPT. G.—(*Catching up hands.*) Ah! don't do that, Pussy, if you love me.

VOICE.—Love you? Of course I do. Who else should it be? (*A pause.*)

VOICE.—(*Very clearly.*) Pip, I'm going now. Something's choking me cruelly. (*Indistinctly.*) Into the dark . . . without you, my heart. . . . But it's a lie, dear. . . . We mustn't believe it. . . . For ever and ever, living or dead. Don't let me go, my husband—hold me tight. . . . They can't . . . whatever happens. (*A cough.*) Pip—*my* Pip! Not for always . . . and . . . so . . . soon! (*Voice ceases.*)

Pause of ten minutes. G. buries his face in

the side of the bed while Ayah bends over bed from opposite side and feels MRS. G.'s breast and forehead.

CAPT. G.—(*Rising.*) *Doctor Sahib ko salaam do.*

AYAH.—(*Still by bedside, with a shriek.*) Ai! Ai! *Tuta—phuta!* My Memsahib! Not getting—not have got—*Pusseena agya!* (*Fiercely to G.*) *TUM jao Doctor Sahib ko jaldi! Oh! my Memsahib!*

DOCTOR.—(*Entering hastily.*) Come away, Gadsby. (*Bends over bed.*) Eh? The Dev—What inspired you to stop the punkah? Get out, man—go away—wait outside! *Go!* Here, Ayah! (*Over his shoulder to G.*) Mind, I promise nothing.

The dawn breaks as G. stumbles into the garden.

CAPT. M.—(*Reining up at the gate on his way to parade and very soberly.*) Old man, how goes?

CAPT. G.—(*Dazed.*) I don't quite know. Stay a bit. Have a drink or something. Don't run away. You're just getting amusing. Ha! Ha!

CAPT. M.—(*Aside.*) What *am* I let in for? Gaddy has aged ten years in the night.

CAPT. G.—(*Slowly, fingering charger's head-stall.*) Your curb's too loose.

CAPT. M.—So it is. Put it straight, will you? (*Aside.*) I shall be late for parade. Poor Gaddy!

110 The Story of the Gadsbys

CAPT. G. *links and unlinks curb-chain aimlessly, and finally stands staring towards the veranda. The day brightens.*

DOCTOR.—(*Knocked out of professional gravity, tramping across flower-beds and shaking G.'s hands.*) It's—it's—it's!—Gadsby, there's a fair chance—a *dashed* fair chance! The flicker, y'know. The sweat, y'know! I *saw* how it would be. The punkah, y'know. Deuced clever woman that Ayah of yours. Just at the right time. A *dashed* good chance! No—you don't go in. We'll pull her through yet. I promise on my reputation—under Providence. Send a man with this note to Bingle. Two heads better than one. 'Specially the Ayah! *We'll* pull her round. (*Retreats hastily to house.*)

CAPT. G.—(*His head on neck of M.'s charger.*) Jack! I bub—bub—believe, I'm going to make a bub—bub—bloody exhibition of by-self.

CAPT. M.—(*Sniffing openly and feeling in his left cuff.*) I b-b—believe I'b doing it already. Old bad, what *cad* I say? I'b as pleased as—Cod *dab* you, Gaddy! You're one big idiot and I'b adother. (*Pulling himself together.*) Sit tight! Here comes the Devil dodger.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—(*Who is not in the Doctor's confidence.*) We—we are only men in these things, Gadsby. I know that I can say nothing now to help—

CAPT. M.—(*Jealously.*) Then don't say it! Leave him alone. It's not bad enough to croak over. Here, Gaddy, take the *chit* to Bingle and ride hell-for-leather. It'll do you good. I can't go.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—Do him good! (*Smiling.*) Give me the *chit* and I'll drive. Let him lie down. Your horse is blocking my cart—*please!*

CAPT. M.—(*Slowly, without reining back.*) I beg your pardon—I'll apologize. On paper if you like.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—(*Flicking M's charger.*) That'll do, thanks. Turn in, Gadsby, and I'll bring Bingle back—ahem—"hell-for-leather."

CAPT. M.—(*Solus.*) It would ha' served me right if he had cut me across the face. He can drive too. I shouldn't care to go that pace in a bamboo cart. What a faith he must have in his Maker—of harness! Come *hup*, you brute! (*Gallops off to parade, blowing his nose, as the sun rises.*)

INTERVAL OF FIVE WEEKS.

MRS. G.—(*Very white and pinched, in morning wrapper at breakfast table.*) How big and strange the room looks, and oh, how glad I am to see it again! What dust, though! I must talk to the servants. Sugar, Pip? I've almost forgotten. (*Seriously.*) Wasn't I very ill?

CAPT. G.—Iller than I liked. (*Tenderly*)

112 The Story of the Gadsbys

Oh, you bad little Pussy, what a start you gave me!

MRS. G.—I'll never do it again.

CAPT. G.—You'd better not. And now get those poor pale cheeks pink again, or I shall be angry. Don't try to lift the urn. You'll upset it. Wait. (*Comes round to head of table and lifts urn.*)

MRS. G.—(*Quickly.*) *Khitmatgar, bow-archi-khana se kettly lao.* (*Drawing down G.'s face to her own.*) Pip dear, I remember.

CAPT. G.—What?

MRS. G.—That last terrible night.

CAPT. G.—Then just you forget all about it.

MRS. G.—(*Softly, her eyes filling.*) Never. It has brought us *very* close together, my husband. There! (*Interlude.*) I'm going to give Junda a *saree*.

CAPT. G.—I gave her fifty dibs.

MRS. G.—So she told me. It was a 'normous reward. Was I worth it? (*Several interludes.*) Don't! Here's the *khitmatgar*.—Two lumps or one, Sir?

CURTAIN.

THE SWELLING OF JORDAN.

“IF thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst they have wearied thee, how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”

SCENE.—*The Gadsbys' bungalow in the Plains, on a January morning. MRS. G. arguing with bearer in back veranda. CAPT. M. rides up.*

CAPT. M.—'Mornin', Mrs. Gadsby. How's the Infant Phenomenon and the Proud Proprietor?

MRS. G.—You'll find them in the front veranda; go through the house. I'm Martha just now.

CAPT. M.—'Cumbered about with cares of *khitmatgars*? I fly.

Passes into front veranda where GADSBY is watching GADSBY JUNIOR, ætate ten months, crawling about the matting.

CAPT. M.—What's the trouble, Gaddy—spoiling an honest man's Europe morning this way? (*Seeing G. JUNIOR.*) By Jove, that

114 The Story of the Gadsbys

yearling's comin' on amazingly! Any amount of bone below the knee there.

CAPT. G.—Yes, he's a healthy little scoundrel. Don't you think his hair's growing?

M.—Let's have a look. Hi! Hst! Come here, General Luck, and we'll report on you.

MRS. G.—(*Within.*) What absurd name will you give him next? Why do you call him that?

M.—Isn't he our Inspector-General of Cavalry? Doesn't he come down in his seventeen-two perambulator every morning the Pink Hussars parade? Don't wriggle, Brigadier. Give us your private opinion on the way the third squadron went past. 'Trifle ragged, weren't they?

G.—A bigger set of tailors than the new draft I don't wish to see. They've given me more than my fair share—knocking the squadron out of shape. It's sickening!

M.—When you're in command, you'll do better, young 'un. Can't you walk yet? Grip my finger and try. (*To G.*) 'Twon't hurt his hocks, will it?

G.—Oh, no. Don't let him flop, though, or he'll lick all the blacking off your boots.

MRS. G.—(*Within.*) Who's destroying my son's character?

M.—And my Godson's. I'm ashamed of you, Gaddy. Punch your father in the eye, Jack! Don't you stand it! Hit him again!

G.—(*Sotto voce.*) Put The *Butcha* down and

come to the end of the veranda. I'd rather the Wife didn't hear—just now.

M.—You look awf'ly serious. Anything wrong?

G.—'Depends on your view entirely. I say, Jack, you won't think more hardly of me than you can help, will you? Come further this way. . . . The fact of the matter is that I've made up my mind—at least I'm thinking seriously of . . . cutting the Service.

M.—Hwhatt?

G.—Don't shout. I'm going to send in my papers.

M.—You! Are you mad?

G.—No—only married.

M.—Look here! What's the meaning of it all? You never intend to leave *us*. You *can't*. Isn't the best squadron of the best regiment of the best cavalry in all the world good enough for you?

G.—(*Jerking his head over his shoulder.*) She doesn't seem to thrive in this God-forsaken country, and there's The *Butcha* to be considered and all that, you know.

M.—Does she say that she doesn't like India?

G.—That's the worst of it. She won't for fear of leaving me.

M.—What are the Hills made for?

G.—Not for *my* wife, at any rate.

M.—You know too much, Gaddy, and—I don't like you any the better for it!

116 The Story of the Gadsbys

G.—Never mind that. She wants England, and The *Butcha* would be all the better for it. I'm going to chuck. You don't understand.

M.—(*Hotly.*) I understand *this*. One hundred and thirty-seven new horses to be licked into shape somehow before Luck comes round again; a hairy-heeled draft who'll give more trouble than the horses; a camp next cold weather for a certainty; ourselves the first on the roster; the Russian shindy ready to come to a head at five minutes' notice, and you, the best of us all, backing out of it all! Think a little, Gaddy. You *won't* do it.

G.—Hang it, a man has some duties towards his family, I suppose.

M.—I remember a man, though, who told me, the night after Amdheran, when we were picketed under Jagai, and he'd left his sword—by the way, did you ever pay Ranken for that sword?—in an Utmanzai's head—that man told me that he'd stick by me and the Pinks as long as he lived. I don't blame him for not sticking by me—I'm not much of a man—but I *do* blame him for not sticking by the Pink Hussars.

G.—(*Uneasily.*) We were little more than boys then. Can't you see, Jack, how things stand? 'Tisn't as if we were serving for our bread. We've all of us, more or less, got the filthy lucre. I'm luckier than some, perhaps. There's no *call* for me to serve on.

M.—None in the world for you or for us,

except the Regimental. If you don't choose to answer to *that*, of course . . .

G.—Don't be too hard on a man. You know that a lot of us only take up the thing for a few years and then go back to Town and catch on with the rest.

M.—Not lots, and they aren't some of *Us*.

G.—And then there are one's affairs at Home to be considered—my place and the rents, and all that. I don't suppose my father can last much longer, and that means the title, and so on.

M.—'Fraid you won't be entered in the Stud Book correctly unless you go Home? Take six months, then, and come out in October. If I could slay off a brother or two, I s'pose I should be a Marquis of sorts. Any fool can be that; but it needs *men*, Gaddy—men like you—to lead flanking squadrons properly. Don't you delude yourself into the belief that you're going Home to take your place and prance about among pink-nosed Cabuli dowagers. You aren't built that way. I know better.

G.—A man has a right to live his life as happily as he can. *You* aren't married.

M.—No—praise be to Providence and the one or two women who have had the good sense to *jawab* me.

G.—Then you don't know what it is to go into your own room and see your wife's head on the pillow, and when everything else is safe

118 The Story of the Gadsbys

and the house *bunded* up for the night, to wonder whether the roof-beams won't give and kill her.

M.—(*Aside.*) Revelations first and second! (*Aloud.*) So-o! I knew a man who got squiffy at our Mess once and confided to me that he never helped his wife on to her horse without praying that she'd break her neck before she came back. All husbands aren't alike, you see.

G.—What on earth has that to do with my case? The man must ha' been mad, or his wife as bad as they make 'em.

M.—(*Aside.*) 'No fault of yours if either weren't all you say. You've forgotten the time when you were insane about the Herriott woman. You always were a good hand at forgetting. (*Aloud.*) Not more mad than men who go to the other extreme. Be reasonable, Gaddy. Your roof-beams are sound enough.

G.—That was only a way of speaking. I've been uneasy and worried about the Wife ever since that awful business three years ago—when—I nearly lost her. Can you wonder?

M.—Oh, a shell never falls twice in the same place. You've paid your toll to misfortune—why should your Wife be picked out more than anybody else's?

G.—I can *talk* just as reasonably as you can, but you don't understand—you don't understand. And then there's The *Butcha*. Deuce knows where the Ayah takes him to sit

in the evening! He has a bit of a cough. Haven't you noticed it?

M.—Bosh! The Brigadier's jumping out of his skin with pure condition. He's got a muzzle like a rose-leaf and the chest of a two-year-old. What's demoralized you?

G.—Funk. That's the long and the short of it. Funk!

M.—But what *is* there to funk?

G.—Everything. It's ghastly.

M.—Ah! I see.

“You don't want to fight,
And by Jingo when we do,
You've got the kid, you've got the Wife,
You've got the money, too.”

That's about the case, eh?

G.—I suppose that's it. But it's not for myself. It's because of *them*. At least, I think it is.

M.—Are you sure? Looking at the matter in a cold-blooded light, the Wife is provided for even if you were wiped out to-night. She has an ancestral home to go to, money, and the Brigadier to carry on the illustrious name.

G.—Then it is for myself or because they are part of me. You don't see it. My life's so good, so pleasant, as it is, that I want to make it quite safe. Can't you understand?

M.—Perfectly. “Shelter-pit for the Orf'cer's charger,” as they say in the Line.

G.—And I have everything to my hand to make it so. I'm sick of the strain and the worry for their sakes out here ; and there isn't a single real difficulty to prevent my dropping it altogether. It'll only cost me . . . Jack, I hope you'll never know the shame that I've been going through for the past six months.

M.—Hold on there ! I don't wish to be told. Every man has his moods and tenses sometimes.

G.—(*Laughing bitterly.*) Has he? What do you call craning over to see where the near-fore lands?

M.—In my case it means that I have been on the Considerable Bend, and have come to parade with a Head and a Hand. It passes in three strides.

G.—(*Lowering voice.*) It *never* passes with me, Jack. I'm alw vs thinking about it. Phil Gadsby funkng a fall on parade ! Sweet picture, isn't it ! Draw it for me.

M.—(*Gravely.*) Heaven forbid ! A man like you can't be as bad as that. A fall is no nice thing, but one never gives it a thought.

G.—Doesn't one? Wait till you've got a wife and a youngster of your own, and then you'll know how the roar of the squadron behind you turns you cold all up the back.

M.—(*Aside.*) And this man led at Am-dheran after Bagal-Deasin went under, and we were all mixed up together, and he came out of the show dripping like a butcher ! (*Aloud.*)

Skittles! The men can always open out, and you can always pick your way more or less. *We* haven't the dust to bother us, as the men have, and whoever heard of a horse stepping on a man?

G.—Never—as long as he can see. But did they open out for poor Errington?

M.—Oh, this is childish!

G.—I know it is, and worse than that. I don't care. You've ridden Van Loo. Is he the sort of brute to pick his way—'specially when we're coming up in column of troop with any pace on?

M.—Once in a Blue Moon do we gallop in column of troop, and then only to save time. Aren't three lengths enough for you?

G.—Yes—quite enough. They just allow for the full development of the smash. I'm talking like a cur, I know: but I tell you that, for the past three months, I've felt every hoof of the squadron in the small of my back every time that I've led.

M.—But Gaddy, this is awful!

G.—Isn't it lovely? Isn't it royal? A Captain of the Pink Hussars watering up his charger before parade like the blasted boozing Colonel of a Black Regiment!

M.—You never did!

G.—Once only. He squelched like a *mus-suck*, and the Troop-Sergeant-Major cocked his eye at me. You know old Haffy's eye. I was afraid to do it again.

M.—I should think so. That was the best way to rupture old Van Loo's tummy, and make him crumple you up. You *knew* that.

G.—I didn't care. It took the edge off him.

M.—“Took the edge off him!” Gaddy, you—you—you *mustn't*, you know! Think of the men.

G.—That's another thing I am afraid of. D'you s'pose they know?

M.—Let's hope not; but they're deadly quick to spot a skrim—little things of that kind. See here, old man, send the Wife Home for the hot weather and come to Kashmir with me. We'll start a boat on the Dal or cross the Rhotang—ibex or idleness—which you please. Only *come!* You're a bit off your oats and you're talking nonsense. Look at the Colonel—swag-bellied rascal that he is. He has a wife and no end of a bow-window of his own. Can any one of us ride round him—chalkstones and all? I can't, and I think I can shove a crock along a bit.

G.—Some men are different. I haven't the nerve. Lord help me, I haven't the nerve! I've taken up a hole and a half to get my knees well under the wallets. I can't help it. I'm so afraid of anything happening to me. On my soul, I ought to be broke in front of the squadron, for cowardice.

M.—Ugly word, that. I should never have the courage to own up.

G.—I meant to lie about my reasons when I

began, but—I've got out of the habit of lying to you, old man. Jack, you won't? . . . But I know you won't.

M.—Of course not. (*Half aloud.*) The Pinks are paying dearly for their Pride.

G.—Eh? Wha-at?

M.—Don't you know? We've called Mrs. Gadsby the Pride of the Pink Hussars ever since she came to us.

G.—'Tisn't *her* fault. Don't think that. It's all mine.

M.—What does she say?

G.—I haven't exactly put it before her. She's the best little woman in the world, Jack, and all that . . . but she wouldn't counsel a man to stick to his calling if it came between him and her. At least, I think—

M.—Never mind. Don't tell her what you told me. Go on the Peerage and Landed-Gentry tack.

G.—She'd see through it. She's five times cleverer than I am.

M.—(*Aside.*) Then she'll accept the sacrifice and think a little bit worse of him for the rest of her days.

G.—(*Absently.*) I say, do you despise me?

M.—'Queer way of putting it. Have you ever been asked that question? Think a minute. What answer used you to give?

G.—So bad as *that*? I'm not entitled to expect anything more; but it's a bit hard when one's best friend turns round and—

M.—So *I* have found. But you will have consolations—Bailiffs and Drains and Liquid Manure and the Primrose League, and, perhaps, if you're lucky, the Colonelcy of a Yeomanry Cav-al-ry Regiment—all uniform and no riding, I believe. How old are you?

G.—Thirty-three. I know it's . . .

M.—At forty you'll be a fool of a J. P. landlord. At fifty you'll own a bath-chair, and The Brigadier, if he takes after you, will be fluttering the dove-cotes of—what's the particular dunghill you're going to? Also, Mrs. Gadsby will be fat.

G.—(*Limply.*) This is rather more than a joke.

M.—D'you think so? Isn't cutting the Service a joke? It generally takes a man fifty years to arrive at it. You're quite right, though. It is more than a joke. You've managed it in thirty-three.

G.—Don't make me feel worse than I do. Will it satisfy you if I own that I am a shirker, a skrimshanker, and a coward?

M.—It will *not*, because I'm the only man in the world who can talk to you like this without being knocked down. You mustn't take all that I've said to heart in this way. I only spoke—a lot of it at least—out of pure selfishness because, because—Oh, damn it all old man,—I don't know *what* I shall do without you. Of course, you've got the money and the place and all that—and there are two very

good reasons why you should take care of yourself.

G.—'Doesn't make it any the sweeter. I'm backing out—I know I am. I always had a soft drop in me somewhere—and I daren't risk any danger to *them*.

M.—Why in the world should you? You're bound to think of your family—bound to think. Er-hmm. If I wasn't a younger son I'd go too—be shot if I wouldn't!

G.—Thank you, Jack. It's a kind lie, but it's the blackest you've told for some time. I know what I'm doing, and I'm going into it with my eyes open. Old man, I *can't* help it. What would you do if you were in my place?

M. — (*Aside.*) 'Couldn't conceive any woman getting permanently between me and the Regiment. (*Aloud.*) 'Can't say. 'Very likely I should do no better. I'm sorry for you—awf'ly sorry—but "if them's your sentiments" I believe, I really do, that you are acting wisely.

G.—Do you? I hope you do. (*In a whisper.*) Jack, be very sure of yourself before you marry. I'm an ungrateful ruffian to say this, but marriage—even as good a marriage as mine has been—hampers a man's work, it cripples his sword-arm, and oh, it plays Hell with his notions of duty! Sometimes—good and sweet as she is—sometimes I could wish that I had kept my freedom. . . . No, I don't mean that exactly.

MRS. G. — (*Coming down veranda.*) What are you wagging your head over, Pip?

M. — (*Turning quickly.*) Me, as usual. The old sermon. Your husband is recommending me to get married. 'Never saw such a one-idead man!

MRS. G. — Well, why don't you? I dare say you would make some woman very happy.

G. — There's the Law and the Prophets, Jack. Never mind the Regiment. Make a woman happy. (*Aside.*) O Lord!

M. — We'll see. I must be off to make a Troop Cook desperately unhappy. I won't have the wily Hussar fed on G. B. T. shin-bones. . . . (*Hastily.*) Surely black ants can't be good for The Brigadier. He's picking 'em off the *chitai* and eating 'em. Here, Señor Comandante Don Grubbynose, come and talk to me. (*Lifts G. junior in his arms.*) 'Want my watch? You won't be able to put it into your mouth, but you can try. (*G. junior drops watch, breaking dial and hands.*)

MRS. G. — Oh, Captain Mafflin, I *am* so sorry! Jack, you bad, bad little villain. Ahhh!

M. — It's not the least consequence, I assure you. He'd treat the world in the same way if he could get it into his hands. Everything's made to be played with and broken, isn't it, young 'un? (*Tenderly.*) "Oh, Diamond, Diamond, thou little knowest the mischief that thou hast done."

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MRS. G.—Maffin didn't at all like his watch being broken, though he was too polite to say so. It was entirely his fault for giving it to the child. Dem little puds are werry, werry feeble, aren't dey, my Jack-in-the-box? (*To G.*) What did he want to see you for?

G.—Regimental shop o' sorts.

MRS. G.—The Regiment! *Always* the Regiment. On my word, I sometimes feel jealous of Maffin.

G.—(*Wearily.*) Poor old Jack! I don't think you need. Isn't it time for The *Butcha* to have his nap? Bring a chair out here, dear. I've got something to talk over with you.

AND THIS IS THE END OF THE STORY OF THE GADSBYS.

L'ENVOI.

WHAT is the moral? Who rides may read.
When the night is thick and the tracks are
blind
A friend at a pinch is a friend indeed ;
But a fool to wait for the laggard behind .
Down to Gehenna or up to the Throne
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

White hands cling to the tightened rein,
Slipping the spur from the booted heel,
Tenderest voices cry, " Turn again,"
Red lips tarnish the scabbarded steel,
High hopes faint on a warm hearthstone—
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

One may fall but he falls by himself—
Falls by himself with himself to blame ;
One may attain and to him is the pelf,
Loot of the city in Gold or Fame :
Plunder of earth shall be all his own
Who travels the fastest and travels alone.

Wherefore the more ye be holpen and
stayed—

Stayed by a friend in the hour of toil,
Sing the heretical song I have made—

His be the labor and yours be the spoil.
Win by his aid and the aid disown—
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

THE GERM DESTROYER.

Pleasant it is for the Little Tin Gods
When great Jove nods ;
But Little Tin Gods make their little mistakes
In missing the hour when great Jove wakes.

As a general rule, it is inexpedient to meddle with questions of State in a land where men are highly paid to work them out for you. This tale is a justifiable exception.

Once in every five years, as you know, we indent for a new Viceroy ; and each Viceroy imports, with the rest of his baggage, a Private Secretary, who may or may not be the real Viceroy, just as Fate ordains. Fate looks after the Indian Empire because it is so big and so helpless.

There was a Viceroy once, who brought out with him a turbulent Private Secretary—a hard man with a soft manner and a morbid passion for work. This Secretary was called Wonder—John Fennil Wonder. The Viceroy possessed no name—nothing but a string of counties and two-thirds of the alphabet after them. He said, in confidence, that he was the electro-plated figure-head of a golden administration, and he watched in a dreamy, amused way Wonder's attempts to draw matters which were entirely outside his province into his own

hands. "When we are all cherubims together," said His Excellency once, "my dear, good friend Wonder will head the conspiracy for plucking out Gabriel's tail-feathers, or stealing Peter's keys. *Then* I shall report him."

But, though the Viceroy did nothing to check Wonder's officiousness, other people said unpleasant things. Maybe the Members of Council began it; but, finally, all Simla agreed that there was "too much Wonder, and too little Viceroy" in that *régime*. Wonder was always quoting "His Excellency." It was "His Excellency this," "His Excellency that," "In the opinion of his Excellency," and so on. The Viceroy smiled; but he did not heed. He said that so long as his old men squabbled with his "dear, good Wonder," they might be induced to leave the "Immemorial East" in peace.

"No wise man has a policy," said the Viceroy. "A Policy is the blackmail levied on the Fool by the Unforeseen. I am not the former, and I do not believe in the latter."

I do not quite see what this means, unless it refers to an Insurance Policy. Perhaps it was the Viceroy's way of saying:—"Lie low."

That season, came up to Simla one of these crazy people with only a single idea. These are the men who make things move; but they are not nice to talk to. This man's name was Mellish, and he had lived for fifteen years on land of his own, in Lower Bengal, studying cholera. He held that cholera was a germ

that propagated itself as it flew through a muggy atmosphere ; and stuck in the branches of trees like a woolflake. The germ could be rendered sterile, he said, by " Mellish's Own Invincible Fumigatory "—a heavy violet-black powder—" the result of fifteen years' scientific investigation, Sir ! "

Inventors seem very much alike as a caste. They talk loudly, especially about " conspiracies of monopolists ; " they beat upon the table with their fists ; and they secrete fragments of their inventions about their persons.

Mellish said that there was a Medical " Ring " at Simla, headed by the Surgeon-General, who was in league, apparently, with all the Hospital Assistants in the Empire. I forget exactly how he proved it, but it had something to do with " skulking up to the Hills " ; and what Mellish wanted was the independent evidence of the Viceroy—" Steward of our Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, Sir." So Mellish went up to Simla, with eighty-four pounds of Fumigatory in his trunk, to speak to the Viceroy and to show him the merits of the invention.

But it is easier to see a Viceroy than to talk to him, unless you chance to be as important as Mellishe of Madras. He was a six-thousand-rupee man, so great that his daughters never " married." They " contracted alliances." He himself was not paid. He " received emoluments," and his journeys about the country were " tours of observa-

tion." His business was to stir up the people in Madras with a long pole—as you stir up tench in a pond—and the people had to come up out of their comfortable old ways and gasp:—"This is Enlightenment and Progress. Isn't it fine!" Then they gave Mellishe statues and jasmine garlands, in the hope of getting rid of him.

Mellishe came up to Simla "to confer with the Viceroy." That was one of his perquisites. The Viceroy knew nothing of Mellishe except that he was "one of those middle-class deities who seem necessary to the spiritual comfort of this Paradise of the Middle-classes," and that, in all probability, he had "suggested, designed, founded, and endowed all the public institutions in Madras." Which proves that His Excellency, though dreamy, had experience of the ways of six-thousand-rupee men.

Mellishe's name was E. Mellishe, and Mellish's was E. S. Mellish, and they were both staying at the same hotel, and the Fate that looks after the Indian Empire ordained that Wonder should blunder and drop the final "e;" that the Chaprassi should help him, and that the note which ran: "*Dear Mr. Mellish.—Can you set aside your other engagements, and lunch with us at two to-morrow? His Excellency has an hour at your disposal then,*" should be given to Mellish with the Fumigatory. He nearly wept with pride and delight, and at the appointed hour cantered to Peterhoff, a big-paper bag full of the Fumigatory in his coat-tail pockets. He

had his chance, and he meant to make the most of it. Mellishe of Madras had been so portentously solemn about his "conference," that Wonder had arranged for a private tiffin, —no A.-D.-C.'s, no Wonder, no one but the Viceroy, who said plaintively that he feared being left alone with unmuzzled autocrats like the great Mellishe of Madras.

But his guest did not bore the Viceroy. On the contrary, he amused him. Mellish was nervously anxious to go straight to his Fumigatory, and talked at random until tiffin was over and His Excellency asked him to smoke. The Viceroy was pleased with Mellish because he did not "talk shop."

As soon as the cheroots were lit, Mellish spoke like a man ; beginning with his cholera-theory, reviewing his fifteen years' "scientific labors," the machinations of the "Simla Ring," and the excellence of his Fumigatory, while the Viceroy watched him between half-shut eyes and thought: "Evidently, this is the wrong tiger ; but it is an original animal." Mellish's hair was standing on end with excitement, and he stammered. He began groping in his coat-tails and, before the Viceroy knew what was about to happen, he had tipped a bagful of his powder into the big silver ash-tray.

"J-j-judge for yourself, Sir," said Melish. "Y' Excellency shall judge for yourself ! Absolutely infallible, on my honor."

He plunged the lighted end of his cigar into

the powder, which began to smoke like a volcano, and send up fat, greasy wreaths of copper-colored smoke. In five seconds the room was filled with a most pungent and sickening stench—a reek that took fierce hold of the trap of your windpipe and shut it. The powder then hissed and fizzed, and sent out blue and green sparks, and the smoke rose till you could neither see, nor breathe, nor gasp. Mellish, however, was used to it.

“Nitrate of strontia,” he shouted; baryta, bone-meal, *et-cetera!* Thousand cubic feet smoke per cubic inch. Not a germ could live—not a germ, Y’ Excellency!”

But His Excellency had fled, and was coughing at the foot of the stairs, while all Peterhoff hummed like a hive. Red Lancers came in, and the Head Chaprassi, who speaks English, came in, and mace-bearers came in, and ladies ran downstairs screaming, “fire”; for the smoke was drifting through the house and oozing out of the windows, and bellying along the verandas, and wreathing and writhing across the gardens. No one could enter the room where Mellish was lecturing on his Fumigatory, till that unspeakable powder had burned itself out.

Then an Aide-de-Camp, who desired the V. C., rushed through the rolling clouds and hauled Mellish into the hall. The Viceroy was prostrate with laughter, and could only waggle his hands feebly at Mellish, who was shaking a fresh bagful of powder at him.

“Glorious ! Glorious !” sobbed His Excellency. “Not a germ, as you justly observed, could exist ! I can swear it. A magnificent success ”

Then he laughed till the tears came, and Wonder, who had caught the real Mellishe snorting on the Mall, entered and was deeply shocked at the scene. But the Viceroy was delighted, because he saw that Wonder would presently depart. Mellish with the Fumigatory was also pleased, for he felt that he had smashed the Simla Medical “Ring.”

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Few men could tell a story like His Excellency when he took the trouble, and the account of “my dear, good Wonder’s friend with the powder” went the round of Simla, and flippant folk made Wonder unhappy by their remarks.

But His Excellency told the tale once too often—for Wonder. As he meant to do. It was at a Seepee Picnic. Wonder was sitting just behind the Viceroy.

“And I really thought for a moment,” wound up His Excellency, “that my dear, good Wonder had hired an assassin to clear his way to the throne !”

Every one laughed ; but there was a delicate subtinkle in the Viceroy’s tone which Wonder understood. He found that his health was giving away ; and the Viceroy allowed him to

go, and presented him with a flaming "character" for use at Home among big people.

"My fault entirely," said His Excellency, in after seasons, with a twinkling in his eye. "My inconsistency must always have been distasteful to such a masterly man."

IN THE HOUSE OF SUDDHOO.

A stone's throw out on either hand
From that well-ordered road we tread,
And all the world is wild and strange;
Churel and ghouls and *Djinn* and sprite
Shall bear us company to-night,
For we have reached the Oldest Land
Wherein the Powers of Darkness range.

From the Dusk to the Dawn.

THE house of Suddhoo, near the Taksali Gate, is two storied, with four carved windows of old brown wood, and a flat roof. You may recognize it by five red hand-prints arranged like the Five of Diamonds on the whitewash between the upper windows. Bhagwan Dass, the bunnia, and a man who says he gets his living by seal-cutting live in the lower story with a troop of wives, servants, friends, and retainers. The two upper rooms used to be occupied by Janoo and Azizun and a little black-and-tan terrier that was stolen from an Englishman's house and given to Janoo by a soldier. To-day, only Janoo lives in the upper rooms. Suddhoo sleeps on the roof generally, except when he sleeps in the street. He used to go to Peshawar in the cold weather to visit his son, who sells curiosities near the Edwardes' Gate, and then he slept under a real mud roof. Suddhoo is a great friend of mine, because his

cousin had a son who secured, thanks to my recommendation, the post of head-messenger to a big firm in the Station. Suddhoo says that God will make me a Lieutenant-Governor one of these days. I daresay his prophecy will come true. He is very, very old, with white hair and no teeth worth showing, and he has outlived his wits—outlived nearly everything except his fondness for his son at Peshawar. Janoo and Azizun are Kashmiris, Ladies of the City, and theirs was an ancient and more or less honorable profession; but Azizun has since married a medical student from the Northwest and has settled down to a more respectable life somewhere near Barilly. Bhagwan Dass is an extortionate and an adulterator. He is very rich. The man who is supposed to get his living by seal-cutting pretends to be very poor. This lets you know as much as is necessary of the four principal tenants in the house of Suddhoo. Then there is Me, of course; but I am only the chorus that comes in at the end to explain things. So I do not count.

Suddhoo was not clever. The man who pretended to cut seals was the cleverest of them all—Bhagwan Dass only knew how to lie—except Janoo. She was also beautiful, but that was her own affair.

Suddhoo's son at Peshawar was attacked by pleurisy, and old Suddhoo was troubled. The seal-cutter man heard of Suddhoo's anxiety and made capital out of it. He was

abreast of the times. He got a friend in Peshawar to telegraph daily accounts of the son's health. And here the story begins.

Suddhoo's cousin's son told me, one evening, that Suddhoo wanted to see me ; that he was too old and feeble to come personally, and that I should be conferring an everlasting honor on the House of Suddhoo if I went to him. I went ; but I think, seeing how well-off Suddhoo was then, that he might have sent something better than an *ekka*, which jolted fearfully, to haul out a future Lieutenant-Governor to the City on a muggy April evening. The *ekka* did not run quickly. It was full dark when we pulled up opposite the door of Ranjit Singh's Tomb near the main gate of the Fort. Here was Suddhoo, and he said that, by reason of my condescension, it was absolutely certain that I should become a Lieutenant-Governor while my hair was yet black. Then we talked about the weather and the state of my health, and the wheat crops, for fifteen minutes, in the Huzuri Bagh, under the stars.

Suddhoo came to the point at last. He said Janoo had told him that there was an order of the *Sirkar* against magic, because it was feared that magic might one day kill the Empress of India. I didn't know anything about the state of the law ; but I fancied that something interesting was going to happen. I said that so far from magic being discouraged by the Government it was highly commended. The greatest

officials of the State practised it themselves. (If the Financial Statement isn't magic, I don't know what is.) Then, to encourage him further, I said that, if there was any *jadoo* afoot I had not the least objection to giving it my countenance and sanction, and to seeing that it was clean *jadoo*—white magic, as distinguished from the unclean *jadoo* which kills folk. It took a long time before Suddhoo admitted that this was just what he had asked me to come for. Then he told me, in jerks and quavers, that the man who said he cut seals was a sorcerer of the cleanest kind; that every day he gave Suddhoo news of the sick son in Peshawar more quickly than the lightning could fly, and that this news was always corroborated by the letters. Further, that he had told Suddhoo how a great danger was threatening his son, which could be removed by clean *jadoo*; and, of course, heavy payment. I began to see exactly how the land lay, and told Suddhoo that *I* also understood a little *jadoo* in the Western line, and would go to his house to see that everything was done decently and in order. We set off together; and on the way Suddhoo told me that he had paid the seal-cutter between one hundred and two hundred rupees already; and the *jadoo* of that night would cost two hundred more. Which was cheap, he said, considering the greatness of his son's danger; but I do not think he meant it.

The lights were all cloaked in the front of

the house when we arrived. I could hear awful noises from behind the seal-cutter's shop-front, as if some one were groaning his soul out. Suddhoo shook all over, and while we groped our way upstairs told me that the *jadoo* had begun. Janoo and Azizun met us at the stair-head, and told us that the *jadoo*-work was coming off in their rooms, because there was more space there, Janoo is a lady of a freethinking turn of mind. She whispered that the *jadoo* was an invention to get money out of Suddhoo, and that the seal-cutter would go to a hot place when he died. Suddhoo was nearly crying with fear and old age. He kept walking up and down the room in the half light, repeating his son's name over and over again, and asking Azizun if the seal-cutter ought not to make a reduction in the case of his own landlord. Janoo pulled me over to the shadow in the recess of the carved bow-windows. The boards were up, and the rooms were only lit by one tiny oil-lamp. There was no chance of my being seen if I stayed still.

Presently the groans below ceased, and we heard steps on the staircase. That was the seal-cutter. He stopped outside the door as the terrier barked and Azizun fumbled at the chain, and he told Suddhoo to blow out the lamp. This left the place in jet darkness, except for the red glow from the two *hugas* that belonged to Janoo and Azizun. The seal-cutter came in, and I heard Suddhoo throw

himself down on the floor and groan. Azizun caught her breath, and Janoo backed on to one of the beds with a shudder. There was a clink of something metallic, and then shot up a pale blue-green flame near the ground. The light was just enough to show Azizun, pressed against one corner of the room with the terrier between her knees; Janoo, with her hands clasped, leaning forward as she sat on the bed; Suddhoo, face down, quivering, and the seal-cutter.

I hope I may never see another man like that seal-cutter. He was stripped to the waist, with a wreath of white jasmine as thick as my wrist round his forehead, a salmon-colored loin-cloth round his middle, and a steel bangle on each ankle. This was not awe-inspiring. It was the face of the man that turned me cold. It was blue-gray in the first place. In the second, the eyes were rolled back till you could only see the whites of them; and, in the third, the face was the face of a demon—a ghoul—anything you please except of the sleek, oily old ruffian who sat in the daytime over his turning-lathe downstairs. He was lying on his stomach with his arms turned and crossed behind him, as if he had been thrown down pinioned. His head and neck were the only parts of him off the floor. They were nearly at right angles to the body, like the head of a cobra at spring. It was ghastly. In the center of the room, on the bare earth floor, stood a big, deep brass

basin, with a pale blue-green light floating in the center like a night-light. Round that basin the man on the floor wriggled himself three times. How he did it I do not know. I could see the muscles ripple along his spine and fall smooth again; but I could not see any other motion. The head seemed the only thing alive about him, except that slow curl and uncurl of the laboring back-muscles. Janoo from the bed was breathing seventy to the minute; Azizun held her hands before her eyes; and old Suddhoo, fingering at the dirt that had got into his white beard, was crying to himself. The horror of it was that the creeping, crawly thing made no sound—only crawled! And, remember, this lasted for ten minutes, while the terrier whined, and Azizun shuddered, and Janoo gasped, and Suddhoo cried.

I felt the hair lift at the back of my head, and my heart thump like a thermantidote paddle. Luckily, the seal-cutter betrayed himself by his most impressive trick and made me calm again. After he had finished that unspeakable triple crawl, he stretched his head away from the floor as high as he could, and sent out a jet of fire from his nostrils. Now I knew how fire-spouting is done—I can do it myself—so I felt at ease. The business was a fraud. If he had only kept to that crawl without trying to raise the effect, goodness knows what I might not have thought. Both the girls shrieked at the jet of fire and the

head dropped, chin-down on the floor with a thud; the whole body lying then like a corpse with its arms trussed. There was a pause of five full minutes after this, and the blue-green flame died down. Janoo stooped to settle one of her anklets, while Azizun turned her face to the wall and took the terrier in her arms. Suddhoo put out an arm mechanically to Janoo's *huga*, and she slid it across the floor with her foot. Directly above the body and on the wall, were a couple of flaming portraits, in stamped paper frames, of the Queen and the Prince of Wales. They looked down on the performance, and, to my thinking, seemed to heighten the grotesqueness of it all.

Just when the silence was getting unendurable, the body turned over and rolled away from the basin to the side of the room, where it lay stomach-up. There was a faint "plop" from the basin—exactly like the noise a fish makes when it takes a fly—and the green light in the center revived.

I looked at the basin, and saw, bobbing in the water the dried, shriveled, black head of a native baby—open eyes, open mouth and shaved scalp. It was worse, being so very sudden, than the crawling exhibition. We had no time to say anything before it began to speak.

Read Poe's account of the voice that came from the mesmerized dying man, and you will realize less than one-half of the horror of that head's voice.

There was an interval of a second or two between each word, and a sort of "ring, ring, ring," in the note of the voice like the timbre of a bell. It pealed slowly, as if talking to itself, for several minutes before I got rid of my cold sweat. Then the blessed solution struck me. I looked at the body lying near the doorway, and saw, just where the hollow of the throat joins on the shoulders, a muscle that had nothing to do with any man's regular breathing, twitching away steadily. The whole thing was a careful reproduction of the Egyptian teraphin that one reads about sometimes; and the voice was as clever and as appalling a piece of ventriloquism as one could wish to hear. All this time the head was "lip-lip-lapping" against the side of the basin, and speaking. It told Suddhoo, on his face again whining, of his son's illness and of the state of the illness up to the evening of that very night. I always shall respect the seal-cutter for keeping so faithfully to the time of the Peshawar telegrams. It went on to say that skilled doctors were night and day watching over the man's life; and that he would eventually recover if the fee to the potent sorcerer, whose servant was the head in the basin, were doubled.

Here the mistake from the artistic point of view came in. To ask for twice your stipulated fee in a voice that Lazarus might have used when he rose from the dead, is absurd. Janoo, who is really a woman of masculine

intellect, saw this as quickly as I did. I heard her say “*Ash nahin! Fareib!*” scornfully under her breath; and just as she said so, the light in the basin died out, the head stopped talking, and we heard the room door creak on its hinges. Then Janoo struck a match, lit the lamp, and we saw that head, basin, and seal-cutter were gone. Suddhoo was wringing his hands and explaining to any one who cared to listen, that, if his chances of eternal salvation depended on it, he could not raise another two hundred rupees. Azizun was nearly in hysterics in the corner; while Janoo sat down composedly on one of the beds to discuss the probabilities of the whole thing being a *bunao*, or “make-up.”

I explained as much as I knew of the seal-cutter’s way of *jadoo*; but her argument was much more simple:—“The magic that is always demanding gifts is no true magic,” said she. “My mother told me that the only potent love-spells are those which are told you for love. This seal-cutter man is a liar and a devil. I dare not tell, do anything, or get anything done, because I am in debt to Bhagwan Dass the bunnia for two gold rings and a heavy anklet. I must get my food from his shop. The seal-cutter is the friend of Bhagwan Dass, and he would poison my food. A fool’s *jadoo* has been going on for ten days, and has cost Suddhoo many rupees each night. The seal-cutter used black hens and lemons and *mantras* before. He never

showed us anything like this till to-night. Azizun is a fool, and will be a *pur dahnashin* soon. Suddhoo has lost his strength and his wits. See now! I had hoped to get from Suddhoo many rupees while he lived, and many more after his death; and behold, he is spending everything on that offspring of a devil and a she-ass, the seal-cutter!"

Here I said:—"But what induced Suddhoo to drag me into the business? Of course I can speak to the seal-cutter, and he shall refund. The whole thing is child's talk—shame—and senseless."

"Suddhoo *is* an old child," said Janoo. "He has lived on the roofs these seventy years and is as senseless as a milch-goat. He brought you here to assure himself that he was not breaking any law of the *Sirkar*, whose salt he ate many years ago. He worships the dust off the feet of the seal-cutter, and that cow-devourer has forbidden him to go and see his son. What does Suddhoo know of your laws or the lightning-post? I have to watch his money going day by day to that lying beast below."

Janoo stamped her foot on the floor and nearly cried with vexation; while Suddhoo was whimpering under a blanket in the corner, and Azizun was trying to guide the pipe-stem to his foolish old mouth.

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Now the case stands thus. Unthinkingly,

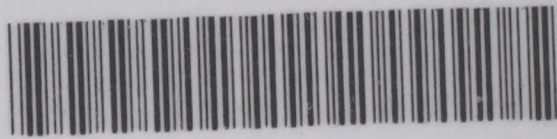
I have laid myself open to the charge of aiding and abetting the seal-cutter in obtaining money under false pretenses, which is forbidden by Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code. I am helpless in the matter for these reasons, I cannot inform the Police. What witnesses would support my statements? Janoo refuses flatly, and Azizun is a veiled woman somewhere near Bareilly—lost in this big India of ours. I dare not again take the law into my own hands, and speak to the seal-cutter; for certain am I that, not only would Suddhoo disbelieve me, but this step would end in the poisoning of Janoo, who is bound hand and foot by her debt to the *bunna*. Suddhoo is an old dotard; and whenever we meet mumbles my idiotic joke that the *Sirkar* rather patronizes the Black Art than otherwise. His son is well now; but Suddhoo is completely under the influence of the seal-cutter, by whose advice he regulates the affairs of his life. Janoo watches daily the money that she hoped to wheedle out of Suddhoo taken by the seal-cutter, and becomes daily more furious and sullen.

She will never tell, because she dare not; but, unless something happens to prevent her, I am afraid that the seal-cutter will die of cholera—the white arsenic kind—about the middle of May. And thus I shall have to be privy to a murder in the House of Suddhoo.





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